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Rookstole

A SUBALTERN'S LETTERS
TO HIS WIFE

A

SUBALTERN'S LETTERS

TO

HIS WIFE

DISCITE VESANAE ROMAM NON TEMNERE GENTES'

CLAUDIAN

SECOND IMPRESSION

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TO
MY WIFE





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A

SUBALTERN'S LETTERS TO HIS WIFE

CHILDREN OF THE VELDT

THE first thing is to pronounce 'veldt' properly ; not with the slatternly English 'v' sound, but with the crisp German 'fow,' or its parallel the English 'f'—so that it recalls the stuff that hats are made of.

A gifted war-correspondent once wrote, at Bloemfontein, a long article in the 'Friend' newspaper on 'The Inexpressible Veldt.' I thought at the time, after a cursory consideration both of the internal and external evidence afforded by the length of the said article and the general physical features of South Africa, that the writer ought to have headed his screed 'The Expressionless Veldt.' A thing about which a correspondent, busied with other matters, and feeling the effects of the heat, can dash off four columns between sunset and sunrise, is hardly to be termed inexpressible. And yet one could sympathise with that author ; there is a fine flavour of the oxymoron about his title which whets the literary appetite, as though a man should say : 'This is not for mortals to express, and lo ! here are four columns.' But I have corrected my first impressions.

Do you remember the look on the faces of the Sphinx and the great Japanese Buddha?—the look which the Eastern peoples with one accord have immortalised in stone

and bronze as the human embodiment of *Nirvana*—the silent, the impenetrable, the all-wise, the eternal? Expressionless they are, because never in the face of child of man was seen that calm consciousness of majesty—that knowledge concerning the things that have been, and the things that are, and the things that are to come: inexpressible they are too, because the soul of man gropes darkly amid the mysteries that seem no mysteries to those awful eyes. So it is with the veldt; it is to *Nirvana* in the natural world what the Sphinx is in the realm of art—illimitable, unfathomable, void. Many writers of a poetic turn have spoken of the ‘smiling landscape’; and true it is that countries, like houses, look at us with different eyes, and some are as harsh and frowning as others are placid and gentle. But how can you describe the veldt? It smiles not, neither does it frown; it gazes at you with the passionless, ineffable gaze of the Sphinx: it is expressionless: and—yes, it is inexpressible. Montesquieu has told us why certain configurations of the earth’s surface produce certain types of character; but no one as yet has told us why one type of scenery attracts men more than another. The Highlander worships his purple hills; the Swiss clings to his flower-strewn alp amid the snows. Small wonder, for there Nature is at her loveliest. But why should men love, and long for, and go back to with rejoicing, the long, bare plains and stony, chiselled kopjes of the veldt? I know men bred in the fairest parts of England who have been miserable till they got back again to their adopted home. The veldt is like the eye of the basilisk; it fascinates, no one knows why. And yet one may hazard a guess. Perhaps it is the sense of freedom born of the unbroken sweep of the land onwards and ever onwards towards the distant horizon; the glorious

exhilaration of that upland air ; the magic touch of that undimmed sun. Yes, but beyond and above all these, there is a something, baffling and elusive ; a *genius loci*, intangible and undefined ; it is in the shapely grandeur of the clean-cut hills ; it is in the rolling miles of grassy flats ; it is everywhere ; it is nowhere ; it is the calm eye of the Unknowable translated into rock and sand.

The first thing the stranger notices is the colour of the veldt. Even in the middle of summer, when sun and rain are working together for good, there is nothing green but the patches of mimosa that flank the course of a river, or the clumps of exotic trees that mark a settler's farm. Yellow gleams the grass that covers the plain ; the distant hills are yellow in the flickering noonday haze. Look closer, and still you search in vain for the emerald tints of the valley and the wood. The *taibosch* (tough bush)—a handsome scrub that grows on the flanks of the hills—is clad in steely-blue ; the *chevaux-de-frise* of aloes that hedge a garden or a kraal resemble bayonets in colour as well as in form—looking, as David Copperfield remarks, as if they were made of painted tin ; there is the same grey hue about the ubiquitous imported *eucalyptus* ; the fleshy leaves of the prickly pear have assimilated themselves to their neighbours ; the very ferns that look out from beneath the black ironstone boulders on the kopjes have more blue in them than green.

The vast immensities—the immense vastnesses—of the veldt are unrealisable. You look round the great circle of the horizon and see a dozen or twenty little flat-topped, isolated kopjes, rising abruptly out of the plain, for all the world like the towering hulls of a scattered fleet tossed on a rolling sea. You mark one on the line of march much nearer than the rest, and you say to yourself ‘ That is

about three miles away,' and you march steadily on for three hours and find yourself not a whit closer at the end of them.

Of two sorts mainly are these kopjes. There is the regular, symmetrical, flat-topped species—the kind of hill you find in a Noah's Ark doing duty as Ararat; and there is the tumbled, disorderly, shapeless congeries of black rocks piled anyhow—Nature's dumping-ground of her superfluous rubbish. Of this latter kind is Magersfontein. Geologists affirm that in prehistoric days the whole land was at the level of the summits of the hills, and that the action of water has denuded the spaces that lie between the outcropping rock. It is somewhat curious that each flat-topped kopje is in itself a microcosm of the huge continent on which it is a speck. The centre of Africa is a plateau raised high above the sea, and shelving steeply (as gradients go) down towards it. In other words, Africa is a huge flat-topped kopje dotted with infinitesimal reproductions. It is the big mamma crab, with the crowd of little crabs squatting on her horny back. Amid these immensities natural features that in other countries give form and character to the scenery are utterly dwarfed and belittled.

A great river is merely a vague line of green winding into space. A *kranz* or rocky escarpment that elsewhere would dominate the whole landscape is here annihilated by the leagues that stretch beyond it. A *spruit* or water-course half as big as Usk seems to make no break in the serene monotony of the Veldt. A massive block of hills looks like a tiny excrescence on a tiny patch of sky. A *sluit* or channel that would influence the whole *coup d'œil* in England is unnoticeable save by those whose path leads them on to it. *Dongas* (marsh), *vleis* (valley or low ground), *rands* (ridge), *randtes* (little ridge), and all such

smaller physical fry are engulfed and swallowed up in the colossal maw of the unending plain. Evidence of the presence of man is rare but unmistakable. The glitter of the dam (rain-water dammed into a pond), the little grove of trees blackly outlined against the ochre of the soil, perchance a glimpse of whitewashed wall or the flash of a corrugated iron roof—these are the unaltering indications of a Boer homestead. That moving cloud of dust obscures a thousand sheep and goats; the dark dots beyond are the mares with foals at foot; in a slow line towards the water move the trek-oxen. Soon an undulating vista of posts betokens the invisible strands of barbed wire; a dim figure crowned with a huge white sun-bonnet stands in a doorway; across the rose bushes the mother calls her child; the spell is broken; *Nirvana* is behind us, and Life is in its place.

Such is the veldt as it appears to strangers, and to those who look upon it from afar; but beneath the death-like serenity of its outward seeming flourish countless forms of life. Its very face is scarred and dimpled with the works of its myriad children. Often and often the only objects that break the interminable sameness of the flat are the tall, red, conical houses of the ants—heaps three or four feet high, compacted of mud and grass. Beneath these the ant-bear digs his den, and battens on the little architects. A mysterious fellow is this same ant-bear, of deep dark ways and nocturnal wanderings—a fly-by-night, scarce ever seen by the diurnal eye; a sort of terrestrial sea-serpent, of whose real existence one grows more and more sceptical. Judging from his earth he must be as large as a good-sized badger; and the number of ants he must consume in his life-time is a thought to stagger the intellect. His fellow-delver is the mere-cat, not a churlish,

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solitary curmudgeon like himself, but a bright, sociable, sun-loving little being, who prefers the gaieties of town to the dulness of the country, and therefore makes a regular Mayfair of burrowings, that rise in a perfect circle above the surrounding veldt. Woe betide the unwary horseman who gallops over that charmed ring of town-houses ! The best horse that ever looked through a bridle cannot dodge through that network of holes at a gallop without coming to grief. But he is a brutish fellow who would be quit of the mere-cat merely because he does not rail in his area. He is the prettiest, alertest, most whimsical little creature in the world, more like a squirrel than anything else, dingy yellow, with a dark head, and a dark stripe down his back, and dark transverse bands across his body. And then his tail ! Oh ! it is a poem of a tail ; it is an entity in itself ; it lives ! Half as long again as his diminutive body, bushy, flexible, insinuating ; now pricked vertically, as rigid as a finger-post, now curled gracefully over his head, now waving slowly to and fro as its owner chats comfortably to his neighbour across the street. There is not the smallest doubt that it is the very finest caudal appendage in the whole world, and calculated to turn a prize Angora cat green with jealousy. The tail sometimes wags the dog, but the tail always makes the mere-cat. You can watch a colony of these Liliputians frolicking in the sunshine for hours together, and not tire of their antics, their affectations, their attitudes, the sparkle of their beady eyes, and, above all, the undulating graces of those glorious tails.

We have given the ant the most honourable place in the category of the children of the veldt because he is like the mustard-seed—a person whose achievements are out of all proportion to his size—and because he alone enjoys the distinction of constructive architecture. The ant-bear and

mere-cat come next, because they too are architects, though of an inferior type, but the noblest creatures disdain to deface and scratch the breast that gives them sustenance, and, like Antæus, they renew their strength by simple contact with their Mother Earth.

When all things were made, none was made better than the springbuck. He is among deer and antelopes what the greyhound is among dogs—the lithest, slimmest, fleetest of his race. The sloping sinuous lines of his quarters convey the most exquisite idea of agility and speed. Triply banded is he, white below, a broad splash of brown on his flank, and fawn above. His head is a skew-bald of white and fawn, crowned with annulated, lyrate horns. But his distinctive glory is his ruff—a pear-shaped zone of fluffy white tapering down from the middle of his back to the tail, which can be elevated or depressed at will. When undisturbed and unalarmed, this ruff makes no break in the glossy surface of the hair, and the brown tail hangs down idly. But send your horse at a gallop towards the herd, and straight up in the air go a hundred tails, now white and fluffy to behold ; as if by magic a hundred fleecy, snow-white ruffs start bristling on a hundred backs, and away like the wind go the antelope in the long, easy springs that have earned them their name. The battle of Driefontein raged over a large herd of springbuck, who circled round and round, in the vain endeavour to break through the hordes that hemmed them in. Pitiabale was their terror as shells hurtled over them, and bullets sang about their ears. Two, if not more, received the missiles meant for the lords of creation, for I saw their mangled bodies slung on two troopers' saddles. One poor wounded beast, an outcast and a pariah in his extremity, came limping up alone to within a hundred yards of where I lay,

but, alas ! there was sterner work toward than the merciful bullet that puts an end to pain.

The stembuck is domesticated, not a wild fellow like his neighbour the springbuck, who only deserts his solitary bachelor habits in order to plunge into an annual vortex of indiscriminate profligacy, and then leaves his sorrowing consorts to their fate and the possibility of twins—but a mild-mannered, ruddy little gentleman, nearly always seen in the company of his wife, or of some other lady. A pretty little creature is the stembuck, not much bigger than a very big hare, with tiny, smooth, pointed prongs of horns. He delights in long grass and tufts of scrub, in which his diminutive body is all but hidden, and seldom will he leave his cover for the bare plain. A sudden jump—a rush—a flash of fulvous red in the waving grass, and the stembuck has vanished from the hunter's ken. Rarer than either of these is the rhebuck. There are two kinds, the *vaal* (or grey), and the *rooi* (or red). The latter is the rarer of the two and the only one I have seen. He lives among the rocks and the conies—in the steepest awkwardest ground he can find. He is mouse-coloured, all but his head and neck, which are tawny ; his under-parts fade into a dirty white. His annulated horns curve suddenly forward, much after the fashion of pins unskilfully bent. He is thick-bodied and a trifle donkeyish, and an ungainly mover on the flat ; but uphill or over rocks he is undefeated.

Hares—rabbit-coloured editions of the English sort—abound on the plain, and the rock-rabbit—the identical coney of Scripture—lives among the stones on the high kopjes. A curiously tame, phlegmatic, puffy-looking little creature is the rock-rabbit, clad in his thick reddish fur-coat. The first time I saw one I thought he was sick of

some dropsical disease; and this impression was rather strengthened by the extreme deliberation of his movements. A Kaffir I had with me to carry the game hurled a large stone at him, which, of course, missed. The rock-rabbit saw that it wasn't coming straight, and never moved a muscle. The Kaffir then advanced upon his victim with a stick, whereupon the coney—all the time as red and as puffy and as stolid as could be—dodged solemnly behind a rock. We both circumnavigated the rock to have another look at our obese friend; and there, sure enough, sat that dropsical rodent, gazing into futurity with aldermanic eyes. I now felt convinced that he was suffering from some mortal disease induced by excessive indulgence in the pleasures of the table (as the advertisements have it); and accordingly I sent a bullet through him. I would have left the bloated body where it lay, despite the prettiness of the warm red fur; but not so the 'boy.' He carried the body home in triumph, and from an old resident I learned that this particular rock-rabbit was in excellent health, and that rock-rabbits in general are given to looking plethoric and moving circumspectly.

The jackal is a night-prowler, and is seldom seen by day. I once surprised one about eight o'clock in the morning hanging about the camp—perhaps meditating a descent on the half-dozen or so scraggy ducks still residing near the garden dam. I had just come off picquet, and was mounted on the best of all my ponies—Dutchman—a horse looted from the Paardeberg laager. I had a stick with a heavy end to it—a sort of *knobkerry*—in my hand. Accordingly I gave chase, and when the wily jackal made for the kopjes I headed him back towards the huge open flat, five miles long and three miles broad, that stretches

between our farm and Bloemfontein. He had the legs of me at first, and I had to ride cunning to keep him off the hills. After half an hour's galloping as hard as we could go Master Jackal began to slow down; instead of going straight ahead he tried the jinking tactics, and eventually led me into a tangle of scrub and boulders, where I should infallibly have come to grief on any other horse than Dutchman. However, we got over it without a fall, and then I assumed the offensive, and clubbed my stick and went full tilt at the now flagging beast. Six or seven times he dodged the blow, but at last I got in a heavy crack on his quarters, and with a snarl of rage he stopped, sat up, and showed fight. This gave me the opportunity I was looking for, and a couple of blows on the head stunned him. At the time I fancied he was dead, and gaily got down and lifted him on to the saddle in front of me. I had only half a mile back to camp, and with one hand clutching his tail and the other his neck I managed very well for some time. But, suddenly, to my intense astonishment and alarm, the dead jackal began to exhibit signs of vigorous life; he grunted, and struggled, and showed his teeth. To add to my difficulties Dutchman had immediately become aware that he was conveying other livestock than myself, and resented the indignity by setting off homewards as hard as he could lay legs to the ground. There was a *donga*, a *shuit*, and some torn-down barbed wire fencing between us and the camp; and I was unable to let go of the jackal in order to seize the flapping reins; for if I had I should either have been bitten or have had to let him go altogether. The chase had been eagerly watched by about forty troopers, and the latter alternative was too ignominious to be contemplated for a moment. I resolved to secure that jackal or perish in the attempt.

On we flew towards the obstacles ; the louder the jackal growled the faster Dutchman galloped ; we floundered through the *donga* somehow ; we took the *sluit* at a bound ; the barbed wire crackled about our legs and fell off again harmlessly ; Dutchman reached his well-known peg and stood still. We were saved ; and while I still grasped the jackal's throat a trooper thrust his knife into it. This jackal was of the species known generally as the *maanhar* (or mane-hair), because he has a ridge of long dark hair running down the centre of his back. His body-colour is yellowish, banded with dark stripes drawn at right angles to his mane. The colours and markings of a mere-cat and this jackal are very similar.

I have seen an iguana, but only for a second. Once, as I was disporting myself in Modder's swift flood, my companion called to me to look up at a branch of the willow-tree that hung over the stream. As I looked the iguana vanished—a crocodilian vision of iridescent colours.

Of the reptiles the lizards are the commonest and the most interesting. Huge invisible bull-frogs croak like the quacking of ten thousand ducks the live-long night through ; the tortoise is rarely seen and never heard, living solitary in grubby darkness beneath the stones on the hills ; snakes are few and far between. But the lizard makes the most of life ; he recognises that sunshine is meant to be basked in ; he has no instinctive distrust of man. Clad in armour of shimmering bronze, ornamented with golden bands above the eyes, he swarms nimbly up and down the precipitous black rocks or lies motionless as a stick in the glare.

More timid than any living thing is the rat that inhabits the secluded hills, far from fear of man's intrusion. I have never caught a glimpse of him except on the rare occasions when I have lain down alone on the kopje-side to await

the dawn. Then, waking from a nap, I am aware of a black eye glittering in a fat brown body ; the slightest movement and the rat is scuttling to his dark retreat.

But undoubtedly the locust is, in some respects, the most characteristic (for want of a better word) of all the children of the veldt, and takes precedence in both human and bestial estimation of creatures far nobler and more beautiful than itself—four-footed, winged, and reptilian. The ant may modify the form of the veldt, but the locust can do more than that ; it changes the colour of the ground and darkens the face of the sky. Desolation and hunger attend its steps, and man and beast alike quail at the sight of that myriad host. A brown cloud—as of the dust of ten thousand horsemen—appears on the horizon, and soon the midday brilliance of the air is quenched by a thousand billion clicking gauze-winged destroyers, passing onwards and ever onwards in an unending swarm. They feed as they go, and ravage where they feed. They rise up hissing from beneath your horse's feet and blind him and yourself ; they buffet your face in their headlong flight ; the earth is grey with them, the air is brown with them ; the sound of them is everywhere. Trains have often been stopped by these creatures, lying a foot thick all over the permanent way, through which the engine churns its road till wheels skid and slip on the oleaginous juices, and men with shovels clear away tons of insects, and others throw sand on to the greasy rails till the flanges consent to bite once more. The Kaffir and the shrike eat them and like them. The former devours them as Christians devour whitebait ; the latter first hangs them up to dry on telegraph wires or fencing, and returns in due season to the high-flavoured banquet. The thrifty husbandman gives you ample notice of the approach of a swarm. He assembles his Kaffirs by

troops and provides them with old biscuit tins and sticks, with which they march in solemn procession round the green crops, beating awful music out of their battered instruments and chanting the lugubrious songs of their race. Others light fires and heap on green stuff till the gardens and the crops vanish in the reek. Thus they march and drum and sing the night through, if need be, scaring the long brown cloud from breaking in myriad destructiveness over the difficult fruits of their labours.

The praying-mantis is a curious, bright green, attenuated creature, something between a daddy-longlegs and a grasshopper, who holds two legs in front of him in the orthodox attitude of prayer, with the unimportant difference that whereas we clasp our hands he clasps his feet. Beetles—huge black fellows barred with gold—play havoc with the monthly roses in the garden at the farm, gnawing holes in the lovely pink effulgences, and sitting unabashed in a halo of golden stamens to await their fate. Grasshoppers compete with bull-frogs for the musical honours of the night; glow-worms, black, shiny and fat, wriggle cautiously about in the shadow of the rocks; tortoises lurk beneath stones on the wooded kopjes and lay the eggs beloved of Kaffirs. A cobra had his lair beneath a green tree that sprang out of the aloe hedge encircling our farm. In the green tree several sparrows had built their nests, and the wily snake made periodical ascents in search of nutritious eggs or more nutritious fledgelings. One day a fearful din was heard: a party of cricketers had discovered the monster red-jawed amid the boughs.

Bats, balls, stones, sticks—everything handy was hurled at the brute; but he slid unharmed to his home amid the aloes, whither no man might follow him. I saw and killed a poisonous little adder one evening about sunset on the

path leading up to one of the offices of the farm ; and those were the only snakes I saw or heard of.

Birds of the veldt are many and beautiful. It is a curious thing that black and white markings, especially on the wings when expanded in flight, are so common as almost to warrant a generalisation. Curious it is, because black and white by no means harmonise with the dominant yellow of the veldt—there is no adaptation to environment, probably because the birds have so few enemies to fear. Tameness is another characteristic of the small birds. You mistake them often for little animals, so fond are they of running jerkily in front of you from stone to stone. Larks there are, and pipits, and others I don't know by name, though I have a large nodding acquaintance among them, cheery little friends at all hours of the day and night, who give the colour of life to the long dead stretches of the plain, and light up the silence with song. Camped by the mimosa and taibosch-fringed bank of Modder, I have often wondered at the volume of sound that invisible songsters send out, when the storm has passed, from amid the dripping black spines and the gleaming green. As far as I understand avine dynasties in South Africa, the *pow* is the king of birds. I believe the *uasvogel* (who is only an undertaker and a sexton rolled up into a very big and ugly jumble) once incited the secretary bird (who naturally is always secretary of state for the colonies) to seize the succession and proclaim himself monarch ; but his tenure of the exalted office was brief, on account of the unanimous decision of the birds in parliament assembled that a king with a permanent pen behind his ear gave too business-like a tone to Court functions. Very few large birds can be seen sitting or standing without loss of dignity. The *pow* understands

this, and always comes to earth unobserved. Sailing swiftly through the dancing sunlight, a patch of throbbing colour against the blue, he looks what he is, a right regal bird. His cousin, the turquoise-headed bustard, is smaller, noisy as *his* cousin the *korán*, and blessed with a glorious azure neck. I only saw him once—near Brandfort. The common *kurhahn* ('scolding hen') is one of the commonest birds of the veldt. Naturalists are divided on the subject of his classification. Some say he is a bustard, others hold that he is a sort of blackgame. The *kurhahn* takes no interest in the controversy, nor yet the Tommies who shoot him. The *korán* prides himself on his motley of black and white, his long yellow legs, and his crested head; Tommy Atkins pursues him with a fowling-piece, thinking of the jolly good stew he makes when he's been undressed and given a hot bath. I remember once two officers of ours going out on the veldt near Makouw's Drift, where we were camped, and having splendid sport with the stembuck, *korán*, guinea-fowl, and hares. The Highland Brigade were camped close by, and in the excitement of the chase one of the colonial sportsmen shot a *korán* which fell plump on to the General's tent. Out rushed 'Fighting Mac' with a wounded foot, furious at this desecration of his privacy, and thirsting for the invader's blood. But his scowl faded into the sweetest of smiles as the apologetic subalterns emphasised their repentance by the offer of two brace of *korán*. You can see a *korán*'s head sticking up above the veldt a long way off, and you stalk him. About forty or fifty yards is the nearest you can get to him before he rises with his discordant scolding scream. Some people hunt him in couples, one man on a pony making a *détour*, and heading the bird down towards the gun, who conceals himself as

best he may behind a bush or stone, or in the grass. Others ride their ponies up to him and shoot from the pony's back. This is perhaps the best way of getting near him ; but not everybody owns a shooting pony.

The vulture (*aasvogel*) is ubiquitous. Alas ! The carcasses are there in their thousands, and the huge brown hideous birds sit in packs round their prey, while dark specks converging from every quarter of the sky momentarily add to the list of guests. In an hour a dead horse is a skeleton covered with a skin. How the creatures manage to do their work through the tiny orifices they bore in the hide is a marvel. Disturbed, they hop away with outstretched wings, for all the world like boys racing tied up in sacks, until they have got up sufficient impetus to rise in a heavy flight.

Geese are rare, but twice I came across them—the black species—handsome fat birds sitting indolently by a reedy pool, knowing nothing of man's partiality, or of his own peculiar way of showing it. Duck are common, and snipe too, who make their home under the hanging banks of a deep reach in a *spruit* where water lies in the dry time of the year. Guinea-fowl and partridges love the long natural grasses where cattle rarely come. The latter are often flushed among the rocks on the kopjes, but the guinea-fowl—larger and portlier than our farmyard friends—prefer ground where they can run swiftly into an obscuring tangle of vegetation. The ring-dove makes her nest in the *taibosch* on the hills, a gleaming, grey, solitary beauty, whom only the solitary wanderer, noiselessly wandering, ever gets to know. Plovers there are of several kinds. A small species they call kittiwitties—tame, sportive little birds who play about together in the sand, and preen their pied plumage fearlessly within a yard of your

horse's hoofs. Martins are as sociable here as in England. My friend Edwards, at Glenlyon, near Bloemfontein, has a little black-coated, white-fronted, swallow-tailed waiter, who daily brings in the courses of an excellent dinner. It is true that he does not wait on Edwards; he flies in through the open door with worms and beetles in his beak to satisfy the maws of his young progeny in the mud-nest in the angle of the ceiling and the wall. A pair of koodoo's horns on one side, a fowling-piece on the other, tobacco smoke everywhere; amongst such surroundings do the martins of Castle Martin bring up their young family.

There are few prettier sights than to watch the sun rise over a dam removed from the early stir of animals and men. The black water fades to grey; two grey figures deepen to black against the amber of the dawn; with pencilled crests and long dependent legs the cranes await the sun.

I have told you only of the birds and animals I have seen and known, but there is one bird I have not seen so remarkable for intelligence that I cannot resist telling you the tale of his cunning. It is the honey-bird, so called because he eats honey, and when (as often happens) he discovers a bees'-nest so placed in a tree-trunk or in the ground that he cannot get at the sweet treasure, he flies about until he finds a man, whom he leads towards the prize by flying in short flights in front of him, and guides with a chirping song. The human puts forth his strength, and the bird receives the reward of merit. It is a charming picture; the fluttering progress across the veldt; the improvised alliance between the lord of creation and the tiny subject; the bird sitting by on a bough to admire the cyclopean work of excavation; the

descent on the booty ; the merry luncheon-party, where the bird takes the head of the honeycomb, and, between beakfuls, chirps congratulations to his guest.

At this season (March) the veldt is not rich in flowers. The hill-slopes that stretch up to the giant Table Mountain from the sea are covered with glorious masses of colour ; there pine-woods jealously shade the delicate loveliness of a thousand flowers ; but climb the *Karoo* and on to the veldt and you are lucky to catch sight of the gleam of a golden mimosa once in a hundred miles. I know a lady who told me that she hoped some day to go to Bloemfontein in order to see the flowers. She had heard that the name meant 'Fountain of Flowers.' I tried to dissuade her from the projected voyage, and told her that she could see more flowers, and better flowers, in a single mile of an English lane than in fifty miles of South African veldt. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico*. The lilies are the best things the veldt grows. I have never seen them in flower, but everywhere their bright green leaves contrast with the yellow grass, in curiously formed rectangular designs sessile on the earth, reminding one of the quaint shapes into which hoary-headed waiters do up the napkins in the dining-rooms of old-world inns. Quite the most beautiful floral sight I saw was in the blood-stained purlieus of Paardeberg—a golden-blossomed mimosa hung about with wreathing fronds of clematis, whose subtle fragrance even Modder's daily hundred of dead horses did not suffice to quench. But of the veldt flowers I think the *ericas* hold the chief place. Numerous and strong-growing, the tufts of white heath often give their own tone to the landscape. Other flowers are few and far between ; the casual observer would hardly notice them. Of all the lesser plants my favourite is the shamrock or

sorrel, whose tiny pink and white striated flowers are more like our field convolvulus than any other I know.

The rock-rose is a lovely thing, with petals of palish yellow and a violet heart, whose leaves resemble our strawberries and potentillas. The veldt is yellow, and so at present are most of the veldt's flowers. Putting on one side the mimosa, whose yellow glory lights up acres, here and there a tansy fires up its flaming corymb amid the grass, and a yellow member of the *leguminosæ* helps the prevailing hue. Yellow daisies ; yellow *compositæ*, like big, handsome dandelions or hawkweed ; most of the flowers prefer to be in the fashion set by the scorching sun. Purple is second favourite. A tiny purple bugloss clings to the scant moisture of the soil ; a tall scabious—the pincushion among flowers—sends forth its heavy, honey-laden scent ; the knapweed ('hard-head' of rustics) riots amid the stones that fringe the hills.

Near Abraam's Kraal, as I was munching my matutinal biscuit and trying to find a patch of dam unsoiled by the incursions of quintupled mules, I wandered into a delicious scent. So strange, so wonderful, to smell anything in South Africa unreminiscent of dead horse. Naturally I made inquiries of the flowers I met. No one could give me any information. At last I got into a tangle of rocks studded with small bushes. They were a sort of bog-myrtle, as sweet as any I ever loved to find wasting their fragrance on forgotten Cambrian moors. Ferns are a great feature of the veldt-flora. In one afternoon, in the kopjes to the south of Bloemfontein, I found twelve different species. Most of them are of the maidenhair type ; steely-blue, black-stemmed, broad-fronded. The subtle variation of their serrations is marvellous. They poke their roots deep into the tortoises' quarters, under the

black ironstone rocks, and peep out to view the world, sheltered by the taibosch and the olive. Those silent hill-sides where the ferns grow seem to me the fairyland of Africa. Blackness, greenness, silence, tortoises and stones, ferns and brilliant shrubs; only the ring-dove swishing through the brake understands how quiet life is there. But, after all, it is the atmospheric conditions that make the veldt, and give their character to its children. The air of the high uplands (4,000 to 6,000 ft.) of the Orange River Colony is as dry and pure as air can be. Distance is annihilated there, and miles cease to convey a meaning. It is forty miles to that kopje, but it looks ten. The air, pulsating in the heat, intensifies the outline of distant objects.

As one gazes at the sublimated contour of a belt of *mirage* trees—lifted, as it were, from the surface of the earth—it is almost impossible to believe that those umbrageous lines are of such stuff as dreams are made of. At four hundred yards the triple band the springbuck wears on his flank gleams out in distinctive layers of white, fawn, and brown; in England, at the same distance against the same background, you would hardly see a springbuck at all.

Day follows day, and still the great arch of heaven is unflecked azure; night follows night, and still the southern stars twinkle undimmed out of a dark background of cobalt. It is only at sunrise and sunset that the perennial blue gives way. And then how magnificent is the show the emulous colours contrive to pass before you ere their brief hour is past! I suppose there were but few mornings during the campaign when I did not see the sun rise. Into a few months I compressed the omissions of a lifetime. The sluggish, especially in South Africa, misses a great

deal. Ruskin justly reproaches us with indifference to the changing beauties of the sky; and I have known people rave about painted scenery at a theatre who never bestow a phrase of appreciation on a sunset. Art is extolled almost, it would seem, at the expense of the Nature it dimly and feebly portrays. But the trooper, happily for himself, cultivates instinctively his artistic sense. He gets up in the cold and the dark, and he saddles his horse with numbed fingers, and a difficulty in determining whether he has put it on hindside in front or no. He rides out to patrol the country, and still it is dark and cold. Instinctively he looks towards the east, and there the piled-up banks of violet cloud stretch like a great pall over the grey horizon. He glances at his watch, and sees that relief is close at hand. Suddenly a saffron line lights up the under edge of the violet clouds; the line spreads into a glow, the clouds fade and disperse in rosy wreaths, the stars are put to flight; great golden arms of radiance, like heralds before a king, shoot out across the saffron to the blue, proclaiming the advent of the greater light to rule the day, and in a moment more the fiery red ellipse of the sun peeps over the black verge of the plain, and slowly grows into the perfect orb. As he mounts the sky, the last belated courtiers of the night, splendid in yellow, violet, and rose, vanish to their rest; his mood changes, his royal ire is appeased, his fierce red mellows to a brilliant scintillating gold; he has conquered the powers of darkness, it is day.

A hail- or rain-storm in South Africa is an experience. Hailstones out there have been known as big as pigeon's eggs, and I myself saw some sheets of corrugated iron roofing through which hailstones had crashed as though through paper. The rain reserves itself for great opportunities. The accumulations of months fall in five

minutes. The sky blackens with marvellous swiftness, a few huge drops harbingers the storm, and then a cataclysm of water sweeps down the firmament in stripes of swaying darkness. I have seen a tent two inches deep in water after five minutes' rain, and I have also seen a trooper, as naked as when he was born, cutting a trench round a tent in the very middle of a desperate downpour, achieving three objects at the same time: the dryness of the tent and of his own clothes, and a bath. At our farm near Bloemfontein there were spouts at the four corners of the house, and huge vats beneath them, into which the rain-storms surged and hissed with stupendous force. The reservoiring of rain-water is the greatest economic question in South Africa. At present little or nothing is done to combat drought. With Government help, individuals might store enough water to eliminate the most anxious factor in South African enterprise. Building railways before you build canals and tanks, is the old device of putting the cart before the horse. It has been done with great consistency, but it is devoutly to be hoped that experience will now invert the process. If so, nobody will appreciate the policy more than the railway shareholder, for his trains will have something to carry more profitable than a few marketing *vrouws*.

The terrors of the southern thunderstorm were brought home to me at Makouw's Drift. My big chestnut horse Careless had foolishly been picketed to a mimosa tree. As we were dining beneath the tarpaulin suspended between the ambulance waggon and two Cape-carts a tremendous storm broke. The night lit up with continuous flashes, and thunder boomed like hundreds of big guns. The rain was coming down in sheets when I made a dash for my tent. As I ran I heard a tearing and a

rending. I looked up, and by the light of a sustained flicker I saw Careless silhouetted: his ears were laid back, his nostrils distended, his tail stiffened horizontally, every line of the animal denoted mortal fear. The mimosa tree was canted over towards the horse, broken by the force of his strugglings, and the horse's head was tight fixed against the thorny mass, round and round which he had wound his riem until he could move no more. I cut the riem with my knife, and the horse galloped snorting into the bushes. Next day we caught him; a thorn had penetrated his eye, and he was blind.

The sunrise is heavenly, and so is the sunset. I think there never can have been an evening more glorified than that on which we rode towards Bloemfontein. The general effect was as though the sky was reflecting some colossal fire. Balloon-shaped tangles of roseate cloud drifted down into the western sea of flame. As we waded through a series of mealie-patches a pom-pom took notice of us; but even the hospitality of 'Come-in-Eliza' failed to turn some of us from our backward glances towards that celestial conflagration. At last it died away, and so did the pom-pom, and the gentian dome glittered with stars. Charles will not admire the Southern Cross because he says it is cock-eye. I cannot see that that constitutes an indictment.

ARCADES AMBO

By far the best built, largest, most comfortable, best furnished farmhouse in the Free State of pious memory. A father of cultivated tastes, who prefers to live alone on a farm in the colony, or away from his children, or both. A drunken, good-natured, good-for-nothing son, who lives amongst cattle and calls himself a farmer. A plain, red-haired, inartistic daughter, with a voice and an accent that between them set your teeth on edge, who cooks and eats, and eats and cooks, and, looking out upon life through the narrow tenellation of her mind, grumbles. A drunken old gardener, who rents part of the premises, and lives in a shed therein, selling his produce in Bloemfontein. A Kaffir or two who milk the cows and drive them forth to pasture. Such was the establishment.

The father was not there, as I have said, but his influence was, and therein lay the pathos of it all. The shelves of the library were stocked with all the best books — travel, history, biography, fiction; Nansen, Lecky, Trevelyan, Lytton. A reading-chair stood between the window and the fireplace, but though the daughter religiously dusted the books and the chair, the words upon the pages never entered into her life or her brother's; it was their father's room, their father's books, and he had a soul, and they had none, and they knew it not. In the dining-room some of the best of the Arundel Society's reproductions hung upon the walls, and the

Madonna and disciples looked down upon a coarse-faced lout rolling in half-intoxicated from a carousal with his boon-companion the gardener to exchange cockneyfied recriminations with a shrill-voiced woman, and so to bed. 'I've lorst my best booy, all through those durned people in the taoun a-talkin'. If ever I get 'old of 'em I'll wring their ears orf, that I will.' So spake the love-lorn damsel who, amid the Giotto's and the Salvator Rosas, generally wore her hair in curl-papers; who saved up all her money to buy a phonograph; whose favourite recreation was the purchasing of dresses which she never wore, but hoarded in Saratoga trunks for great opportunities which never came; who could afford to buy phonography and fifteen-guinea frocks from England, but could not afford to keep a Kaffir woman to act as housemaid; who never cast a glance at the glories of the cerulean convolvulus on the stoep, but buried herself in malodorous store-cupboards. I had it in my heart to pity her, so lonely was she with that brother; but there came the thought of the father, intellectual, artistic, refined, chased from home by want of sympathy, by disgust; and the emotion of pity died.

As within the house, so without. In the garden—the old gardener's property and work—roses nodded over jettisoned meat-tins to the carnations; ferns waved their fronds over broken whisky-bottles; horses roamed at will over the unfenced stoep, and dung lay on the window-sills, and crushed the tender blossoms of trailing creepers.

The fenced-in plot of ground around the house might have been a garden full of the loveliest flowers, for water was abundant and near at hand; but no; there was no mind to desire loveliness, no energy to carry out a design; and so the long grass brightened itself with

tansies, and wild tomatoes clustered round the pillars of the stoep.

I don't want to be hard on the poor girl. God knows she had much to contend against. And she was kind after her fashion to her six dogs. Pat, the great liver-coloured retriever, who lay chained up all day to the stoep, and wandered loose in the dining-room all night—a formidable, growling, inappeasable Cerberus; Spot, a liver-and-white pointer of indeterminate sex, as fat as gentlemen of his condition often are; Tim and Dick, two jolly little sporting rough-haired terriers; and two long dogs, whose names I forget, one of which suffered from a disfiguring disease which some called tuberculosis and others warts.

And she was kind to us too. There was never a morning but a cup of cocoa was to be had as the sun rose after early patrol; she used to bring me cocoa at eleven, and again at five, if I was in; she cooked our food, hunted springbuck, hunted butter, hunted vegetables; she had our clothes washed; she let us empty her rain-water tanks to fill the bath in the little disused bath-house in the garden—the bath built by the father and never requisitioned by the children; she let us inside the house and fill the rooms, and play on the piano in the parlour—the piano which the father could play and loved to hear played, and his daughter preferred a phonograph! In her dreary way she made our visit as pleasant as she knew how. Poor thing! what a break in the monotony of her existence our incursion must have been! In the intervals of her grumblings we used to chaff her and make her laugh; heavens! what a jaw-cracking guffaw it was—a disused sort of laugh that was rusty for want of oiling, which with practice might have mellowed down into

something quite genial and hearty. 'Wur 'ave you bin all this lorn'g time?' 'I've bin in the gyarden, smokin' a cigyar, and 'avin' a look at your bally kyart, that you knocked the paint orf last time you went to taoun. Why cyan't you learn to drive? You're old enough!' Thus the Arcadians held converse at rare intervals, in accents that soon got upon the nerves. He spent his days in what he called the 'office'—a motley collection of little tin shanties where the old gardener had a rug-covered trestle bed in one room, and he kept malodorous, badly-cured springbuck and jackal skins in another; in a third he had a high stool and some dirty writing apparatus which I fancy was seldom used. The big sweet-scented verbena bush grew close outside these premises, alongside the pink monthly roses. The old gardener consumed at least one meal a day, but no one knew whether or no his landlord supported life on alcohol alone. Regularly at lunch-time a plate used to be heaped high with meat and vegetables, and sent out down the garden 'for the old gyardner,' as our red-haired friend expressed it. Once, when the troops had been some time in Bloemfontein, and whisky was worth a sovereign a bottle, and almost unprocurable at that, our host did show his nose inside the dining-room. The Major was away. 'D'you think the Major would lend me a bottle of whisky? The old gyardner's got a very bad stomach-ache, and he thinks a little whisky'd do it good.' I'm afraid I was responsible for a good deal of intemperance. The military operations round Bloemfontein had diverted the inhabitants' minds from the peaceful art of horticulture, and consequently the old gyardner had done very badly. But when I began buying carnations and roses, and daphnes and gallardias, and pansies and zinnias to deck my spacious room withal,

affairs looked brighter. The flowers were delightful, and money had long lost all meaning for us. So I presume I paid more than the things were worth, and provided the old gentleman with a superfluity of pocket-money.

‘Oh, give me one of them flowers! Nobody never gives me any flowers now!’ Thus a vision of beauty in spotted white veil, white cotton gloves, and a sailor hat, attired to drive her old horse in the Cape-cart into town for the bi-weekly treat: partly to buy groceries, and partly to be cut dead by several supposititious flames, and so to be provided with a grievance—mental food for absorption during the long day’s menial grind of cooking, washing, brushing, bed-making.

If that clownish brother of yours were only worth his salt, you would not have to beg flowers from casual visitors; any other man would have turned on the water ready to his hand, and made the rich virgin veldt glow with form and colour. But he has his own groove, like a mole, and he works gropingly along it. It was part of his scheme to sell your grey riding-horse to a trooper without your knowledge or consent; that is, in his eyes, at once good business and a profound joke. Let him go his way; Leo, the Kaffir he despises, and, on occasion, kicks, has a soul above his. Leo’s dark mind can seize new impressions and turn them to advantage. One morning he saluted me with a vast grin illuminating his visage. ‘Boss! my wife got a daughter yesterday! What you think me going to call her? Sarah Roberts Buller Kitchener Leo!’

Go your way, too, you poor, distraught, perceptionless, *bourgeoise* piece of humanity, and find the happiness you lack! I cannot forget that I saw you first—idealised through ignorance—working in your shady English hat in

the cool of the evening under the peaches and the medlars with your dogs. You reminded me of home, and I loved you for it. I do not love you now ; but you deserve to win the affections of that peerless swain—that cold, that fickle pork-butcher ; for I believe that you have lived according to your lights.

HOW RIMINGTON TOOK BRANDFORT

THE sun was slanting towards the west before a shot was fired. Hutton's brigade had been on the march from Brakpan since five o'clock in the morning ; a long, slow, unimpeded progress across rolling veldt, where wild horses galloped snorting before the advance of the scouting line, and turquoise-headed bustards rose scolding into a blue that dimmed the radiance even of their gorgeous jewelled necks. Rimington was escort to the guns, and, as usual, left nothing to chance. 'Take your troop,' he said to me, 'and go out two thousand yards on our right front ; I don't intend to get *my* men into another Sanna's Post business if I can help it.' So away we went—out of the fog and taste and smell of yellow dust, and the cramping and the rumbling and the perpetual back-aching foot's-pace ; out in extended order at a long gliding canter into the sunshine, unfettered by the clumsy volition of three thousand soldiers trying to move like one. It is good to be able to halt when you like ; use your glass when you like ; walk when you like ; canter when you like. Happy the subaltern of Rimington's—a General of Division in miniature, commanding a diminutive army of sixteen men and a sergeant ; saying to a man 'Do this,' and he does it, and to another 'Do that,' and he does it ; ordering individuals as though they were corps ; evolving his own schemes of attack and defence ; jogging his tigerish little troop across the plain in all the dignity of solitude and

isolation, with a perfect microcosm of a Field Marshal's cares thought out and ready for use beneath his battered hat. So we trot on at our ease, chattering together cheerily as our wont is ; comparing notes now and again as to black specks moving in the shimmering distance ; sharing our 'skoff' (which is South African for food in general and biscuits in particular) ; hewing down barbed wire fences ; watering our horses here and there in the shallow, muddy rain-pools. About midday, when the column behind us looks dimmer than ever in its wreathing dust-cloud, we spy a Kaffir kraal on a knoll dotted pleasantly with willows, and encircled by a well-filled sluit. Here is just the kind of place which necessitates the exercise of the embryo general's highest powers ; there are chickens at a kraal, and the men's haversacks are as empty as their stomachs ; there are Kaffirs at a kraal, possessing ideas as to the enemy's movements ; absolutely unreliable and untrustworthy ideas it is true, but yet ideas, miscalled 'information,' which must be distilled painfully from native Unintelligence and recorded for the edification of the Intelligence of the Officer attached to Rimington's ; a worthy gentleman deputed by the War Office to collect lies and rumours, and to exhibit them, like curious reptiles in a museum, neatly tabulated in unending reports.

But that sluit is just the place to hold Boers, and the trees are thick and dark ; the banks of the sluit look steep, deep, and unjumpable, and the mud-and-stone walls of the kraal yonder might hide a score of men. Send out a scout or two to reconnoitre ? Not so the microscopic general ; he has played that game before, and seen a brave man weltering in his blood while the hands that sped those murderous bullets are plying the sjambok against their horses'

ribs half a mile away before the dead man's comrades can start upon a pursuit that is hopeless from the first. He has learned to know the Boer's pet aversion—which is the chance of being outflanked; he has also learned to know that no one shoots so well at a galloping horse as he does at a stationary or slowly-moving one. A word in the ear of the astute Brigadier-Sergeant, and the attack is elaborated. To every man the scheme is explained, and action under various possible contingencies described; for in Rimington's we are rank heretics from the orthodox cult of martinets, and one or two of us have actually been known to consult a trooper as to a tactical movement, with the happiest results to all concerned.

So there is a wait only while big-bearded, quiet old Ned Green—blacksmith by profession, and the keenest-eyed man in the troop, who can see as well without a glass as most men with one, and who has often found us honey by watching a bee fly home two miles away across the open veldt—marks down the two easiest places to cross the sluit; and then the infinitesimal division breaks at a canter in half, the while carbines are unslung; one half, under the General-Lieutenant, making for the kraal by the shortest route; the other, under the Brigadier-Sergeant, galloping round the willows to take the Boers, if Boers there are, in flank and rear. Thud, splash, clatter; as we dash in an open, sinuous line across the thousand yards that lie between us and the sluit; will it be a scramble, or a jump, or a ford, or a fiasco? Indian file we rush into it—a leap down, a cloud of muddy spray, a gallant horse's effort, and we are up the other side; and there goes Brigadier-Sergeant Vice, sailing away behind the willows, clear of the dyke, and rising the knoll beyond. Now let the Boers fight, if they want to; we have got them on both sides, penned like sheep. But they are not here to-day; no shot sounds

with its double-muffled crack, like a blanket shaken, from the kraal in front ; only a gibbering old Kaffir woman sits there shredding pumpkins into an earthen dish. So girths are loosed ; horses are turned out to graze with reins trailing over their heads ; enormous quantities of excellent milk are produced from a wattled hut, the shape of an inverted basin and very little bigger ; and an aged Kaffir, who emerges from his seclusion on discovering our pacific intentions, throws mealies to a party of ingenuous hens, who are decoyed by their appetites within reach of his far-darting arm, and are caught by the leg and decapitated, and tied up to the D's of the saddles of the army. So, after remunerating the aged couple in the amount of sixpence per hen (which is thought extremely liberal by a retainer born north of Tweed, who is of opinion that fourpence would create no injustice), we light our pipes, catch our horses, and move slowly on. A few miles further, and a farm comes in sight—a patch of whitewashed wall flashing through the dark umbrage of the eucalyptus ; a tiny, restful green oasis in the ochre monotone of the stupendous veldt. There is forage to be had at most farms, oat-straw or mealies or both ; the favourite diet of the country-bred, who bolts his government ration of oats without deigning to chew them, and then wonders that they prove so unsustaining. No Boers here either ; for the advanced guard of the column has reached the place ; and yes, through a glass you can see them raining golden straw from the loft on to the heads of dingy figures, who strap the precious stuff on to their saddles with the feverish haste of men who are under orders to advance. Half the column is in front of Rimington and the guns, and by the time they arrive the straw will be on top of a thousand greatcoats. But if I let Rimington know that there is oat-straw ahead, do you

think he will stand upon the order of his going? What are guns in comparison with horses? What signify the arbitrary dispositions of a Brigadier? It is certain that somebody must get the straw, and Rimington justly piques himself on the condition of his horses. One cannot be everywhere at once, and sleek horses have a tendency to get in front of their leaner friends. So Pat Nolan, Irishman, gentleman-trooper, professional jockey, and wittiest of comrades, is despatched pell-mell back to the main body with the news of loot, while we follow in the footsteps of the now vanishing Australians, and harvest the flying bundles ere they reach the earth. A small house of the conventional type, the iron roof, the stoep (verandah), the cramped flower-garden, the plain gable, all are there; closed stands the door, and green Venetian shutters cover the windows; the place wears a funereal and mourning look, as though lamenting the premature decease of the winter forage.

Suddenly through the crunch-crunch of the quiet horses and the strident shouts of the clamouring crowd, there steals an unearthly voice of harmony, an exquisite ethereal sobbing melody, that carries into the flickering sunshine eternities of unfathomed grief, and dies in a low wail upon the passing breeze. So it was, and I for one was not for trying to discover the musician. An old Dutch organ in a barred-up, apparently abandoned farmhouse; that much seemed certain. Why descend to grosser realities? A phlegmatic *vrouw*, doubtless; a sort of female Nero strumming while the accursed English pillage her barn! Or perchance a Boer Skimpole, a child in matters commercial, rejoicing that his host's crops should be utilised without the degrading mediation of gold. To this day I know not whether that glorious

music was of heaven or of earth ; Israfel himself, who sang so wildly well, could not have chanted a diviner song.

On again, with that weird creature of vocal spheres beyond our ken still mutely accusing in our ears, as though an angel had spoken amid the turmoil and hate and desolation and blood of human strife.

There were unbroken piebald horses hereabouts, showing a grand strain of blood, as wild as hawks, galloping with long tails flowing disdainfully. The Brigadier-Sergeant tried to round up some of them, but failed to accomplish anything save the tiring of his chestnut, for there was not a strand of wire for miles, and it seemed as if the piebalds might have cantered into the next world without meeting anything to stop them. A few miles more and a long rocky ridge rises out of the horizon ; a message comes from the Major telling us to rejoin the main body ; as we turn, the guns come thundering past us at a trot, the whole column is cantering forward, for the long dark ridge guards Brandfort on the west, and the battle is about to begin. General Hutton and his staff took up their position on a small isolated kopje to the east, and commanding a view of both sides, of the ridge on which our guns were playing. Rimington's little band—about sixty men all told—were dismounted behind the General's post of vantage. Naturally, being Colonials, and seeing no reason why a General should be avoided by his fellow-men as though he had the plague, they crowded round him on the summit, glass in hand (for, thanks to public-spirited friends at home, nearly every trooper in the corps possesses telescope or field-glasses, the value of which you may better estimate in blood not spilt than in money spent), now taking a squint at the distant bursting shells upon the ridge, now listening eagerly to catch the

terms of an order given to a red-collared A.D.C. 'I don't want you men here—get down!' says the Brigadier presently. So down the black ironstone rocks we slide abashed, and sit near the patient waiting horses and munch biscuit and chocolate if we've got any, and criticise the monumental exclusiveness of Generals. But we had seen enough from the top to give us an idea of the position. On our right front, about two thousand yards away across a perfectly level plain, the pretty little town of Brandfort, a chequer of white and green dominated by a black church-spire, nestled at the foot of a beetle-browed hill. This kopje looked as if it were frowning at the town for having had the audacity to plant itself so close under its nose. A solitary, misanthropic old kopje evidently; living apart from its fellow kopjes, and abominating man and all his works. Beyond this hill, and across our proper front, stretched a very low ridge—a *randte*, or little *rand*, as the Boers would call it—which faded gradually into the flat about a mile away on the left. Further still away on the left (west), level veldt ran up to the re-entrant of the kopjes held by the Boers. The outer rim of the arc of kopjes faced our guns. Our munchings and our criticisms were not of long duration. Rimington—a majestic, ruddy, long-limbed figure, big among big men, and smartest of the smart—came striding down the stones with a smile on his face and words in his mouth. 'Stand to your horses! Mount! Walk march!' And then, a little way out on the plain to the east of the kopje, whence Brandfort glittered across the veldt like an emerald set in gold. 'To the halt, form squadron.' We had mounted and ridden away in a dead silence. We knew we were going into action. I have invariably noticed that men going into action turn their mental energy into thought instead

of speech. Light-hearted fellows as they mostly are, whistling, singing, joking, swearing, laughing, storytelling, on the march, round the bivouac-fires, halted for a noontide rest, even in the cold darkness of the early start, there is not one of them, when first he hears the order for a fight, who does not for a few moments hang his head and think. Do you wonder? Careless as he is of danger and of death, he is muttering into his beard a prayer that if he falls his wife and children may keep their places in the race of life.

‘We are going to take that kopje,’ says the Major, pointing to the beetling crag overhanging the town. ‘I want you all to understand exactly what I am going to do. We shall start at first as if we were going straight into Brandfort, and then, when we’ve drawn their fire, we shall wheel off to the left as if we were going for the ridge in front of us there, and finally we shall sweep off suddenly to the right and charge the kopje. Now I don’t want you to kill your horses: you may want them badly presently; take it easy till you get the word to charge, and then go at ’em for all you’re worth.’

Thus Rimington, a man beloved by his men, as possessing the wariness and cunning of a Boer wedded to the dash and daring of an Inniskilling Dragoon. It was, in truth, both a bold and clever scheme. The misanthropic kopje lay between the town and the low ridge, and was commanded by the fire from both; even supposing the kopje to be undefended, it would have been madness to have taken it under a heavy cross-fire. But the feint against the town would elicit the strength of its defenders, and the feint against the *randte* likewise. At the bulge of the S-shaped movement we should come within range of any Boers on the kopje, and with luck might draw their

fire too. But the kopje—the key of Brandfort and our objective—was the unknown quantity ; the chance we had to take in more senses than one. ‘Unslung carbines. From the centre, five paces extend.’ In a long line the sixty men cantered slowly towards peaceful little Brandfort. The Major—a gigantic warrior on a tiny roan Basuto war-horse—led the van, attended closely by Corporal Foster (gentleman-jock, trainer, orderly and horse-master) and the Intelligence Officer, armed with his inseparable and only weapon—a prodigious telescope some three feet long and bulky in proportion—famous in the corps under the *sobriquet* of The Maxim. In front and in the centre of the two squadrons rode the captains ; behind them the four troop officers dotted the swaying line. It was not until we were within eight hundred yards of the nearest houses that a shot was fired in greeting. An ineffectual, desultory, small-piping kind of fire, that only stirred a few rings of dust on the veldt ahead, and dipped under our horses’ bellies without recognisable hiss. That was enough for Rimington. ‘Right shoulders : steady on the left there !’ he bellowed in his taurine manner. The left of the line slackened and fell back ; my troop on the extreme right spurred up into the new line ; we could see no more of Brandfort now ; our eyes were fixed on the dark horizon of the ridge. All this time our guns were thundering against the arc of kopjes in our rear. Suddenly a trooper on the extreme left gallops out of the line towards Rimington. We look towards the left beyond him and see at a glance what he has gone to tell ; for there the late defenders of the hills are galloping away in heavy clouds of dust—black silhouettes on an ochre background ; while shells burst beautifully between and among the little straggling groups ; and horses race on riderless and men

run from horses that will never rise again. But Rimington had his own purpose, and was not to be diverted from it in order to try to cut off a few Boers with a good start. On we crept towards the ridge; and now the bullets of an unseen foe were zipping and pinging about our ears. One went through a horse's wither and both wallets, making a clean hole through six packets of cigarettes and smashing up much-prized odds and ends. Poor Corporal Kirton—correspondent to the *Daily Graphic*, Johannesburg engineer, patriot and fighting-man—that cost you many a whiff of your favourite smoke, and yet it let you and your horse off lightly all the same. The horse made no sign, and Kirton only discovered the damage when he off-saddled an hour afterwards. Another horse was hit in the off hind leg above the hock, not hard enough to stop him; and that was the sum total of our casualties. As usual, the Boers made very poor shooting. When we got within five hundred yards of the *randte*, the Boers, perceiving that their fire failed to stop us, got on their horses and bolted in the northerly direction taken by their friends from the arc of hills. Now was the psychological moment; 'Right wheel,' yelled Rimington, pulling out and cocking his Mauser pistol as he changed direction; and then, when we were within four hundred yards of the crag we had got to take, 'Charge!' It was a splendid sight; the Major, erect upon his pony with long legs reaching almost to the ground, pointing his pistol steadfastly at the rocks ahead and spurring on at full speed into the unknown. The charge degenerated, I am afraid, into a race. I know that the men behind broke into a hound's-cry of diabolical yells and hootings—a composite war-shout, which included half a dozen languages and many strange oaths; I know that I became possessed by a great fear that my revolver would

discharge itself into my grey's head instead of a Boer's ; I know that I had the greatest difficulty in keeping ahead of Flora Macdonald—the bay mare belonging to the trooper of that ilk, who always ran away at a great pace with her muzzle level with her crest, on the smallest provocation. Beyond this all is vague ; it was tremendous ; it was the quintessence of life. Still no shots ! We raced on to the rocks, left our horses in the charge of every fourth man, and clattered up the hill amid a roar of orders, shouts, objurgations, and exclamations—the vents by which unsatisfied battle-frenzy invariably escapes. Not that anybody paid any particular attention to the orders or anything else ; every man was much too busy disposing of his own stock of excitement. In most cases it took the form of discharging a rifle without sighting it, close to a friend's ear if possible, and not necessarily at any particular object. I believe on this occasion that we stood in far greater danger from our friends behind us than we did from our foes in front. However, bullets were still striking on the rocks, and sensible persons took cover behind boulders, and tried to make their miserable, useless little Martini-Metford carbines do their duty at eight hundred yards. It was at this point that a Kaffir appeared on the outskirts of the town below us, waving a rifle madly, and contorting his body in the strangest manner. It was obvious that the man wished to indicate his surrender, but several battled-frenzied spirits refused to accept this interpretation and discharged their pieces at him before they could be prevented, fortunately without doing him an injury. Thereafter a forward move was made towards the summit of the crag, which seemed as devoid of Boers as the lower slopes. But a dishevelled, unshaven, yellow-moustached figure sprang up suddenly from behind a stone,

and a young gentleman from Johannesburg, about to proceed to Oxford, trooper, batman and scholar, immediately drew a bead and fired. The bead, however, had apparently disliked the idea of resting on an Irish-American renegade, for he escaped unhurt, only to surrender sullenly a moment later. The man's ferocity was appalling. He called us (*quâ* Englishmen) every foul name that he could lay his tongue to ; he declared that he preferred death to capture by such a race ; he paid us the double-edged compliment of saying that he had mistaken us for Boers. This having been brought to Rimington's ears, he promptly ordered the guards to take off the prisoner's boots and socks and tie his hands behind him ; in which predicament he looked, if possible, uglier than before. Meantime another Dutchman had been brought to book, an unwarlike-looking Zarp (South African Republic policeman), whose trousers, tucked within his socks, mild expression and flowing beard, gave him somewhat the appearance of a Don going a-hockeying. We were now in complete possession of the kopje ; Brandfort lay beneath us like a map ; we had taken a city with a loss of two horses wounded.

To the west of the railway line, for miles along the undistinguishable track of the Kroonstad road, the enemy was fleeing. Horsemen flashed past Cape-carts, Cape-carts out-distanced waggons, goaded oxen shambled on desperately in the rear. The victory was ours ; but, as usual, we had no horseflesh left for the pursuit.

One of my troop was sent back to the Brigadier with the news, and he told us afterwards that he overheard General Hutton say to his Chief Staff Officer : ' Well, I never imagined that Rimington could do so much with so few men : what would he do with a thousand ? ' ' Walk straight into Pretoria, I should think,' replied the C.S.O.

DUMB COLLEAGUES

No one who is not a Pythagorean can go through a campaign without damage to his belief in the kosmos. The ancient Greek's philosophy, like the Roman religion, resolves all doubts. Whether either of them is a system a reasoning being can believe in is debatable. Pythagoras said that by the process of metempsychosis, or transmigration, the souls of men, at their death, inhabit the bodies of animals. The souls of good men pass into the bodies of such animals as live happy and contented lives; the souls of evil-doers are tortured by the sufferings of the most unfortunate of their kind. Thus it comes about that when the Pythagorean sees a fallen horse kicked in the mouth by his brutal rider, he rejoices that a former wife-beater is receiving his due; when he sees mules dying of starvation and exhaustion, he reflects that these are horse-masters who, on a higher plane, inflicted the very sufferings which they are now experiencing. It is a comfortable doctrine, and one I would not have been without in South Africa for all the fabled treasure of Golconda. There are times when he who lacks such a belief must feel the very foundations of his creed shaken. Besides, the theory lends itself indefinitely to all the humorous situations comprised by poetic justice. In Kimberley men ate horse, liked mule, and delighted in donkey. It is pleasant to think of a former intolerant vegetarian, lately moving in asinine

circles, carefully fattened to provide the besieged with an extra good dinner on Christmas Day.

How often has my anger and sorrow at the spectacle of a Kaffir cutting patterns on a mule with his long whip turned to joy in the conviction that not long ago his victim was some cruel bully of a schoolmaster who loved to raise weals on the hands of little children with his cane ! It is difficult properly to estimate the value of the part played by animals in the war. Horses carried men and drew guns ; mules dragged ambulance and supply waggons ; oxen drew guns and waggons. The sun burned them day by day ; the cold tortured them by night ; they were insufficiently fed, and their labours were never-ending. Like the men, they went into the fore-front of the battle and received ghastly wounds, but their brute-nature is held to constitute a bar even to mental recognition of their heroism and fortitude. I cannot sympathise with this generally-accepted view of animal intelligence. It might possibly be absurd that Parliament should vote formal thanks to the animals engaged in a campaign (though we have no reason to believe that animals cannot understand everything we say to them, and the history of animal education proves that their brains are almost indefinitely ductile under sympathetic treatment) ; it might possibly be absurd to issue a medal to horses as well as men (though Lord Roberts's famous white Arab was specially awarded those decorations for his conduct in Afghanistan and elsewhere) ; but it is certainly absurd that people who recognise a horse's timidity during thunder, or in the presence of a train, should feel no surprise at his impassivity amid the roar of guns and the shrieking hiss of shells. There is no explanation possible other than that which ascribes to animals a large share

of what we postulate as their heritage by our expression 'animal courage.' The courage of the soldier is animal courage. There is, in my opinion, no qualitative difference between a man's and a horse's courage; but the man, being a flesh-eater, and having a less acutely sensitive nervous system, has a reserve fund of this sort of strength, which carries him further than the brute. Every hunting man knows the difference between a high-couraged horse and a refuser, just as every sergeant, subaltern, and captain knows the difference between a good man and a funkstick. I am disposed to believe that courage amongst men and amongst horses varies in about the same ratio. Horses know their danger as well as men do, and, like men, their conduct in its presence is not commensurate to its extent. A horse that will shy at a bit of paper in the road going to cover will not turn his head at a gate when he's beat. A man who funks taking a header off a spring-board will walk cheerfully forward under a decimating fire. In both cases the danger is appreciated, and, as it were, distorted in the mind of both man and beast; the lesser danger producing terror, the greater stimulating fortitude. It may be argued that, whereas the man knows the danger of bullets, the horse does not. But this I can controvert out of my own experience. Near Makouw's Drift one morning we fell in with Boers. It is enough, for the purpose of my argument, to tell you that my pony Tommy stood quietly waiting for at least five minutes, with the reins over his head, while eighty Boers, about two hundred yards away, were showering bullets all round him.

Directly I got on the pony and galloped away the Boers concentrated their fire on us. Tommy moved as though he knew his life depended on his speed. The

little horse understood the danger as well as I did; there was no need for whip or spur; he took every obstacle in his stride, and at a pace I could never extract from him afterwards.

There can be only one solution of these facts. The horse understood that he was wanted, and even under fire he had the pluck to stand immovable. Directly his rider gave the signal for retreat he galloped with a fury which abundantly testified to this consciousness of the meaning of those enveloping hisses. The legitimate inference is that horses can restrain their natural fear of phenomena whose effects they may never have experienced themselves. This presupposes a very high degree of intelligence as well as of courage. The horse must realise that bullets maim and kill, even though he has never been hit. Tommy was no exceptional horse; but the facts of this case constitute a useful criterion. Judge the rest of the cavalry and artillery horses by his standard, and how pitifully low seems the everyday estimate of horse-knowledge and horse-courage! Truly, if these gallant creatures have not their reward, it is because they cannot ask for it. Men expose their stupidity in speech, and animals veil their intelligence in dumbness.

Whatever degree of understanding may be variously assigned by different persons to animals, there will be no difference of opinion as to their capacity to realise hardship and suffering. Incalculably greater than the sufferings of the men, great as they were, were the sufferings of the horses and mules in the war. Exposure, hunger, death by drowning were all vastly more instant and intense dangers for the animals than for the men.

The men sometimes had tents, the animals never had a shelter; the men had blankets, few of the horses and

none of the mules ever got the benefit of a rug. Our men rarely or never were seriously in want of food; but our horses undoubtedly lost condition through insufficient feeding. The hard work they were forced to do made night-grazing on the veldt an utterly inadequate substitute for corn, even if it had been possible to loose horses during the night, which in most cases it certainly was not. We thought ourselves very lucky if we got eight pounds of fodder a day—either oats, mealies, or compressed forage—for our horses, and considering that the horses were being worked every day, and generally all day, that was undoubtedly an inadequate allowance, even when supplemented by haphazard and irregular snatches of grass and looted maize. But very often four or six pounds was the most we could get, and sometimes there was none at all. A horse will eat twenty pounds of oats a day if he is not stinted; and the best authorities consider ten pounds a fair average allowance for horses in ordinary work, besides hay. Now our horses frequently were under their saddles for fourteen hours at a stretch, and on several occasions they have had to work for thirty-six hours without any sleep and with but few intervals for food.

Excellent as was the quality of the Government rations, the amount, owing to almost insuperable difficulties of transport and location, was in most cases insufficient, and this accounted in great measure for the failures of our cavalry.

As we travelled up country I saw a sight at Orange River which I shall never forget. A lot of horses were going up to the front, and within the high-boarded trucks alongside the platform you could hear them stamping and neighing. I just had time to go to the remount depôt and get a horse (a shocking brute he was) between our

arrival and departure. One of the trucks was opened in order to let in my acquisition, and there a horrible sight met our eyes. A mob of gaunt horses were kicking each other out of the way in their efforts to get at and eat their own dung. I suppose they had had no food since leaving Capetown forty-eight hours or more previously. Fifty yards away, across the line, huge stacks of trussed hay were looming heavenwards. I dare say they are there to this day. It was stealing Government property, but I risked it. A man was found willing, for a consideration, to carry a truss across the line, and we hastily opened the truck and scattered the truss among the struggling beasts. We had just finished when up came a hidebound major, in charge of the starving horses. 'What are you putting that hay in there for? Leave my horses alone!' Fortunately he did not go the length of turning the hay out again. The red-tape of the army never looks so sanguinary as it does when its meshes choke the heart and the life out of dumb creatures. The horses were starving; the hay was there; the men were there; yet callousness, or red-tape, or negligence, or all three combined, resulted in the infliction of terrible and unnecessary suffering.

Till I went to South Africa I had never seen a horse whose hunger counteracted its natural fear of man. At Paardeberg I remember there was a great gaunt mare, who under happier circumstances would have been black, but who then was a patchwork of brown and yellow mottlings. She had been cast by the Compo's, and the grass was all eaten up for miles around. She attached herself to us—I suppose because we had more corn than other people. Wherever there was a sack of mealies open or a nosebag full this empty hull would steer full speed, tearing at nosebags on other horses' heads, taking their kicks with equan-

imity, and caring not at all for the rain of blows which irate pillaged troopers poured upon her flanks. This went on for two or three days, and at last someone suggested the abatement of the nuisance with a bullet. What happened to that poor starving creature I cannot say; she disappeared from our ken; perhaps she died; perhaps a merciful bullet hastened the inevitable.

One labour-saving device greatly, almost universally, in vogue amongst the Kaffir drivers of the transport trains, had a most prejudicial effect on the mules' comfort and condition. This was the plan of tying five mules together short by the head and turning them thus shackled out to graze. Five mules tied up in knots are easier to catch than five individual mules with heels always in the place where their heads ought to be. The 'boys' think more of their own convenience than the mules'. For the latter detest the arrangement. Just as an outside mule comes to a nice bunch of grass, the other four see another bunch or two further on; and they pull the reluctant outsider, still hungry, along with them. The outside mule takes his revenge later on. This unfortunate division of purpose is not always the worst feature of the arrangement. Sometimes the head-ropes are too long, and a mule turning round to admonish his neighbours with a friendly kick gets his hind legs over the rope; and then there is a terrific concatenation. I found a quintet near the railway at Bloemfontein once in such a state that none of them could stir an inch; three of them had their heads tightly wedged against their chests; and none could graze. I jumped off my horse and cut their thongs amid a jumble of legs and tails, and the fact that I was not kicked is strong evidence of their condition. Major Rimington, whose mules were the best conditioned in the army, never by any chance

allowed his natives to resort to this cruel and damaging practice, and it would have been better for everybody except the lazy Kaffirs if his example had been universally followed. Great as was the suffering caused by want of forage, its direct natural results were probably *nil*. Indirectly, through exhaustion, it played havoc.

The route from Paardeberg onwards past Koodoosrand to Poplar Grove, and thence to Bloemfontein, was marked, like the caravan tracks across the desert, by hecatombs of the victims of disease, weariness, and wounds. Oxen sank down beneath the yoke and were released to lie where they fell until death overtook them; exhausted mules were given another chance of life against great odds; horses that had carried men to victory lay scattered where they received their death-wounds. No ambulance corps ministered to the wants of these poor sufferers, no kindly orderlies brought water to assuage their agonising thirst. Even the merciful bullet that puts an end to pain was generally denied them. Leave has to be obtained to shoot an animal, and frequently, where large bodies of men are in the vicinity, such a course is attended with great danger. I remember a subaltern of the Essex telling me the horrors of the sight that greeted those who stormed the heights at Driefontein. He said he could endure to look on the wounded men, but the speaking eyes of the dying animals unmanned him. He besought his colonel's leave to shoot several of them. He obtained it, and, taking care that no troops whatever were in the direct line, he killed them with a Lee-Metford. Yet, notwithstanding his precautions, at least two of the bullets whizzed past men bivouacked at right angles to the line of fire, and induced expostulatory messages. There is never any knowing where a bullet will go; anything will deflect it.

I suppose more horses died within the narrow limits of the Boers' laager at Paardeberg during a fortnight than over the whole theatre of war during the remainder of the campaign. It is computed that over a thousand floated down the river in two days, and in the course of a short bathe I counted fifteen of the gas-inflated noisome carcasses. Two came suddenly round a willow-bush and surged down the swift current within a foot of my head. The whole atmosphere of the camp for miles around was laden with the stench of decaying bodies. Air and water alike were saturated with the germs of disease. Here, as elsewhere, the animals couldn't help faring the worst. Men, women, and children burrowed and tunnelled into the soft loam of the river-banks, but the horses were huddled together on the open flat. The sight we saw on the morning of the surrender was ghastly. Within the ellipse once formed by waggons, then marked by wrecks of woodwork and heaps of calcined iron, there lay hundreds of horses in every stage of putrefaction. One group—worthy of sculptured immortality—will ever live in my memory. Three horses lay piled one upon another, as though, wounded by the same shell, they had struggled to give one another the last sympathy of contact. There they lay in all the marbled grace of death, three friends who, in their death, would not be divided. Terrible was the agony expressed in the contortion of the topmost horse.

His glossy bay neck, down which a thin crimson stain was oozing, curved back in a splendid arch, propped against the wither of the horse below. The lips were drawn back from the gums, and the glistening teeth clenched convulsively in the black mane of his prostrate comrade.

Drowning was another danger which weighed more

heavily on animals than men. One morning at Paardeberg I went down to the drift and saw six mules, writhing under heavy punishment, vainly trying to drag a waggon through the rapidly rising river. The drivers flayed them, naked Kaffirs jumped into the rushing water and pushed and pulled, but all to no purpose. Two hours later I came down again; the waggon stood in mid-stream as before, but the mules were gone. Enquiry elicited the news that they had been enveloped in the spate and drowned as they stood. I have seen horses drown in a shallow drift when watering, falling down and refusing to make an effort to save themselves, as though, weary of life, they had realised that death came more easily there, in the cool rushing flood, than to the wounded and waterless upon the burning veldt.

The watering of horses and mules was one of the great permanent features of war-life. The animals were a necessity, so was the water, and consequently wherever one might be there was a crowd of horses and mules, and some sort of shallow muddy pool. Twice a day, about ten and five, the long files of horses wound across the veldt, drank, and returned. A trooper, riding bareback, led another horse; two and two they advanced; two and two they fringed the margin of the dam, sucking up the thick fluid with the haste born of experience; two and two they marched orderly homewards.

Equine maladies are as numerous in South Africa as elsewhere. Horse-sickness, *dikkop sikte*, pink-eye, influenza, these are the commonest complaints. Horse-sickness is a spasmodic epidemic like influenza, which comes and goes no one knows why or how. There is a prevalent theory to the effect that it infests uncultivated ground where miasmatic vapours hang, and retires before civilisation.

This is hardly borne out by facts. Like influenza amongst human beings, its incidence appears to depend on a particular rotation of unascertained atmospheric conditions. Fortunately for us, horse-sickness was of the rarest occurrence in the years 1899-1900. *Dikkop sikte*, or 'thick-head sickness,' was commoner. The symptoms were a swelling of the head and sheath, a purulent discharge from the nose, and blindness.

My favourite pony, Dutchman, the Paardeberg acquisition, sickened at Bloemfontein of this fell disease. As ill-luck would have it, the inspecting veterinary surgeon paid us his visit when he was at his worst. He at once ordered him to be destroyed. It was with real sorrow that I told my batman of the inexorable verdict, and saw him lead out poor Dutchman to the confines of our camp. A few minutes later a revolver bullet put an end to the gamest little horse I ever rode. Tommy, the other pony, had the same disease; but the veterinary officer never discovered him and he recovered. But six weeks after his convalescence he was so weak that he fell down with me in the course of a short afternoon's ride, and when I came home he looked such a wreck that I could not get a bid for him.

Absence of proper food and exhausting work tended to magnify any small ailment until the whole constitution of the animal suffered. My big chestnut horse, Careless, put his eye out on Makouw's Drift. I gave him a complete holiday for a month, but the first day I rode him he fell down twice within five minutes, and took every bit of skin off both his knees. For six weeks he was no use again, and finally I sold for £10 an animal for which I had given £35.

Injuries from barbed wire were all too common. Even

a modern hunting man can form no idea of the universality of this South African hedge. It was everywhere. A wire-cutter was an instrument on which one's life often depended. But too often the treacherous strands were utilised as picketing ropes. Horses were tied up at short intervals to the convenient fixture, and frequently cut and tore themselves in the most terrible manner. I remember seeing the blood spurt in jets from the severed artery in the fetlock of a beautiful little Basuto pony a trooper had bought only two days previously. The hemorrhage was stopped, but the pony was lame ever after.

The system of purchase, as regulated by Government in the case of the Guides, seemed specially designed to work injustice to the horses. The trooper who provided his own horse received 10*s.* a day; the man who rode a horse provided by Government received 5*s.* a day. As a serviceable horse could be got for anything between £10 and £20, it was to the trooper's advantage to buy a horse; for the purchase money would be recovered in a couple of months, and afterwards the trooper would make 5*s.* a day and have in reserve the horse itself. Naturally every man who possibly could bought a horse. But many of them had become attached to the Government horses they rode; there was nothing wrong with these animals; frequently they were better animals than the purchased substitutes. Under these circumstances the trooper came to the adjutant and offered to buy his Government horse at a fair valuation. In every case the same answer was returned: it was against Government rules. The result was that the trooper, whose affection for his wife and family outweighed his affection for his faithful beast, discarded the latter directly he came across a Kaffir with a decent animal for sale. The discarded Government horses were herded together

under the general term of 'spare horses,' and very spare indeed most of them soon became. Docked of their usual corn, dependent entirely upon scanty grass, ungroomed, uncared for, ridden by Kaffirs, knocked about by any trooper whose horse was sick for the time being—the once smart and sleek pony soon degenerated into a feeble, useless drudge.

By this absurd system Government lost the value of their horses, and frequently lost the horses themselves. It was a system which was extravagantly wasteful—tending to create a mob of seventy or eighty horses which neither did, nor were, for the most part, in a condition to do, any work; it stimulated theft on the part of the Kaffirs, who sold horses for nominal prices to troopers; and, worst of all, it subjected faithful dumb colleagues to the pains and penalties of neglect. Economy, efficiency, humanity—all were set at naught by the red-tapeists of the War Office!

Various types of horses were to be seen in South Africa, from the colossal black Compo. charger down to the diminutive Burmese pony. Walers, Canadians, English, Basutos, Arabs, Argentines and country-breds, constituted the bulk of the remainder. There is not a shadow of doubt that, other things being equal, a small horse is the best in warfare. He is not a large mark, he can be mounted and dismounted from easily, he is easily hidden behind rocks. His belly is more easily filled than the belly of his big friend.

The country-bred horse of South Africa is, in my opinion, the best animal of his inches in the world. He is marvellously hardy, easy in his paces, clever as a cat over holes and bad ground, generally fast, and up to a surprising amount of weight. He is, besides, generally of excellent temper, without vice or tricks, trained to stand for hours

in the same place by himself, and wonderfully good-looking. At the other end of the scale comes the Argentine. We had a lot of them in Rimington's, introduced by the 'Buffalo Bill brigade' who joined from South America. Vicious, goose-rumped, obstinate and stupid, they were eternally falling into holes, kicking, biting, refusing to go into or leave the troop, and generally doing all that a troop-horse should not do. English horses kept their condition wonderfully; but their size, for feeding and hiding purposes, is against them. There can be no doubt that for military operations in any part of the world the Cape or Orange River Colony horses are unsurpassable. They are inured to the extremes of climate, and they possess almost every qualification required in a charger. The obvious duty of the Imperial Government is to form in South Africa a gigantic remount dépôt, whence to supply the military needs of the whole Empire.

In this war horses were bought at £40 in England and shipped to South Africa at £20 a head. Total cost, £60. A four-year-old country-bred, bred by the Government, ought to cost less than £5. To those who realised the excellence of the native horse and the vast area over which he is to be found, the necessity for the importation of English horses came as a significant revelation of want of foresight and lack of method. The African problem is not of such recent growth as to warrant the neglect of local available resources displayed by our military authorities. It is not too much to say that if we had had 15,000 horses ready to hand at the outbreak of the war, the Boers never would have invested Ladysmith, and would have been anticipated at Magersfontein.

Good-bye, my dear dumb friends—Careless and Tommy and the grey! Dutchman is already dead, claimed by the

inexorable fiat of hardship and disease. He was the best of you all ; and those whom the gods love die young. Yet you have toiled and suffered and bled—without public thanks, without ambulances, without medals ; uncovered in the freezing nights, without water in the burning days ; spending your lives in the service of men whose aims and strife you may or may not comprehend. Who knows ? I know that you have been brave and long-suffering, and that is enough. I remember the graves of your kind near Bloemfontein, dug by grinning Kaffirs a stone's throw from the cemetery, where sad-faced British soldiers were burying their friends ; no tear was shed above you, no cry went up to God for you ; and yet, if you are but brute beasts, could you have done all you did ? God only knows.

ARMY REORGANISATION

THE late General Joubert is credibly reported to have said (*vide* 'Times' obituary notice) that 'British officers make the grand mistake of thinking that their opponents are as stupid as themselves.'

A well-known English colonel, who has added to a great reputation in South Africa, sarcastically remarked, as he lunched with us one day by Modder's flood, that the Boers inflicted the death penalty on any man who killed a British general.

There is a family likeness about these two opinions which, considering their diverse origins, is highly unpleasant to contemplate. They tend to show that friend and foe alike ascribe our military mistakes to the tactical errors of officers in high command. The whole history of the war confirms this view. The British Tommy Atkins, the British and the Colonial Volunteer, have shown in a hundred fights that they will go anywhere, and dare anything. So has the British officer; his courage is magnificent. But whereas the troops have done all that was expected of them, the officers have not. The latter seem, in many cases, to have forgotten that their responsibilities do not begin and end with a charge at the head of their regiments. Hence the long sad list of preventable deaths, of unnecessary wounds, of prisoners, of wholesale surrenders, of humiliating defeats, of degradations—so that

'Stellenbosched' has passed into a proverb—of suicides, of blighted hopes, of shattered reputations.

It is an indisputable fact that the Boer leaders—ignorant farmers for the most part, who have never been to Woolwich or Sandhurst, and who do not know what the outside of a drill-book looks like—have been more than a match for the science of the majority of our field officers. Perhaps 'science' is the wrong word, for in my humble opinion the blunders which came within my own experience were the result of a want of foresight and intelligence which no reasonably capable civilian, suddenly placed in command, would have displayed. Take the Sanna's Post catastrophe. I have heard people maintain the monstrous proposition that the officer in charge of the transport was responsible! If that were so, the whole theory of the commanding officer's authority and responsibility falls to the ground at once, and subordinate officers would be at liberty to make their own dispositions, quite regardless of the C.O., and with a view only to their own ideas as to eventualities! What a fine conception of military discipline and subordination! On that occasion the officer commanding, fighting a rearguard action, absolutely disregarded the possibility of the enemy getting in front of him, and marched with his scouts (Rimington's) in rear and his waggons in front, paying no attention to the country into which he was advancing. Finally, he bivouacked between a river and a spruit, and at dawn advanced (still without scouting) into the very midst of the Boers concealed among the vegetation of the ravine. The facts of this case constitute an indictment for negligence which, in the navy, would assuredly result in a court-martial. Why not in the army? If our object is to have an efficient army rather than a close corporation

for the maintenance and whitewashing of inefficiency, the sooner the wholesome fear of public inquiry is introduced the better. And for another reason ; under our present system of Bowdlerising despatches and hushing up blunders, there can be no certainty that points of difference arising between officers will be equitably settled. It is notorious that a general degraded a cavalry commander ; it is equally notorious that the said cavalry commander has persistently demanded a Court of Inquiry into the matters in dispute between himself and the general, and has been as persistently refused. Under the present system the senior officer has the power of a judge in his own cause.

Then take the affair which ended in poor L.'s death, and the mutilating of another very promising young officer. Two colonels, armed with revolvers, with a party of three under their orders, also armed with revolvers, all of them out on a butter-and-egg-hunt, see five Boers and cry, 'Come on, let's round the beggars up !' If it is true, as reported, that L. opposed the mad project, it throws added pathos over his untimely death, and proves that there are subalterns, young enough to be their colonels' sons, who are far more fitted than they are to command. If ever a court-martial were needed, it was in this case, to determine how far irresponsible senior officers, not acting under orders or on the battle-field, may jeopardise the lives of themselves and their companions. This episode, conspicuous among deeds of reckless daring, justifies the remark a Boer made in my hearing : 'You English fight to die, we Boers fight to live.' All five men were hit, L. through the heart.

Then there was the Poplar Grove fight, where 4,000

cavalry were kept in check by about 300 Boers, and through the incapacity of their commander were obliged to sit still and look on while the enormous Boer transport-train wound its dusty serpent-trail into the horizon. Six miles away the enemy were fleeing—amongst them President Kruger—and yet no effort was made to capture even a waggon. There was no method, no tactics, no cohesion between units, no application of common knowledge.

The cavalry was massed in solid blocks, standing for hours together as marks for bullets. De C., of the Life Guards, was shot in the stomach as he sat still on his charger. No organised attempt was made to advance and seize the river behind the Boers; regiments wandered out to kopjes, took them, left them, and returned to their brigades. A few men might be seen here and there making use of cover and their carbines, but for the most part the British soldier seemed to imagine that his object in coming out to South Africa was neither to kill the foe nor save himself, but rather to let the enemy alone and expose himself. The opposition was practically *nil*, and yet nothing at all was attempted. Anything more egregiously foolish than the appearance of those great massed solid blocks of immovable horsemen, sitting stolidly quiet in view of the enemy, cannot be conceived. Why, oh, why were they not all on their bellies on the veldt? Our own part in the battle seemed to me singularly inglorious. We fired about twenty shots from behind a kopje, and that was the sum of our offensiveness. On the other hand, we galloped over a ridge into shell-fire, and then out of the shell-fire into rifle-fire, losing two men in the process. Major Rimington did his best to make his corps of some use, but he was prevented. There was a farmhouse on our right flank which was tenanted by half a dozen Boers,

who were allowed to stay there at the expense of the whole division. At last Rimington, in desperation, and quite unaided, with his eighty or ninety men, sallied out into the open to capture the farmhouse. Before he had gone very far a messenger was despatched at full gallop by the brigadier ordering his return.

On this occasion it is morally certain that Rimington in advancing was doing the right thing, and that the brigadier, in recalling him, was doing the wrong thing. But it is impossible to say what orders the brigadier had received. The action of Poplar Grove (as far as the outflanking cavalry movement was concerned) gave the impression of over-centralisation.

Modern battles extend over so large an area that a single commander is quite incapable of personally directing every advance and every retreat. And yet it does not appear that, recognising this essential truth, he always takes the trouble to explain his objective to his brigadiers, and give them a free hand to work as units towards the end in view. If the brigadiers were qualified for their posts, this course would appear the obvious and the best. But the fact that at Poplar Grove General French tried to retain all the initiative in his own hands, with signal want of success, rather goes to prove that he was sceptical as to the power of his subordinates to make good use of a delegated authority.

Whatever were the facts in this particular case, there can be no doubt that the area of modern battles imperatively demands the power of initiative on the part of local or inferior commanders, and thus accentuates the measure of skill and energy required in commanding officers. It is admitted that modern conditions of warfare necessitate greater initiative and intelligence on the men's

part, and the same holds good of their officers in increased degree.

The blowing-up of Glen Bridge and the loss of the waterworks are two conspicuous examples of want of ordinary prudence. I was informed by a resident in Bloemfontein that on March 13, the day of our occupation of that place, a staff officer came to an old inhabitant and asked what points of defence required immediate attention. The reverend gentleman replied: 'Well, that's a big question; but on the spur of the moment there are two that at once occur to me: the railway-bridge at Glen and the waterworks.' On the night of March 16 the bridge was blown up by half a dozen Boers; and some time afterwards the waterworks were recaptured by the Boers, after the repeated appeals of the officer in charge for reinforcements had been neglected.

The majority of the cavalry officers I heard of seemed to know far less of warfare than their civilian allies. A squadron of the 10th Hussars were rescued from a very desperate position at Colesberg solely by the energy and enterprise of Sergeant Brown, of Rimington's,—a man who had spent his life farming and hunting. He got a commission for his bravery and skill. If Brown had not been there they would all have been killed or captured. 'What shall we do?' asked the unfortunate subaltern in charge, gladly handing over his Sandhurst intelligence into the keeping of an unlettered farmer. Brown was never tired of expatiating on that subaltern's coolness and courage; but, after all, those are not the only qualities required in an officer. Near Ventersberg Road a detachment of Scots Greys and Inniskillings were fired on from a farm, and they promptly charged, losing twenty odd officers and men, killed and wounded. This kind of thing

is magnificent, but it is not war. The farmhouse was not captured, and the Boers escaped. It would be easy to multiply examples. The lesson of them all is the same, that the average British officer is supremely plucky and supremely stupid. If official confirmation of this view is needed, it is to be found in the scathing criticisms of the Commander-in-Chief at Aldershot, as reported in the 'Times' of August 18, 1900. There it was discovered, as though for the first time, that men who had devoted years to military science were unable practically to carry out one of the simplest of tactical movements. It has been discovered more than once in South Africa, by persons carrying less authority than the Commander-in-Chief. Unfortunately the results of incompetence have varied in South Africa and at Aldershot.

It is no doubt easy to criticise, and far less easy to reconstruct. But it is comparatively easy to point out negatively some of the disadvantages under which the army labours. To begin with, the cleverest boys do not go into the army; only a trifling percentage of sixth-form boys in public schools choose the service for a profession. The reason is, that they can find more lucrative employment elsewhere, and also more certain recognition of their talents. At the bar and in the medical profession ability carries its own weight; in the army ability is an encumbrance until it finds a rare scope. Take a single instance. If General Baden-Powell had been a barrister he would long ago have made a name and a fortune. In the army he was unknown to the world until a fortunate chance put him in command of the beleaguered garrison of Mafeking. The first thing, then, to be done is to raise the officer's pay from its present miserable pittance to a sum commensurate with the difficulties, dangers, and

responsibilities of the profession. Is it not anomalous that a clerk in an office should get more than a subaltern on whose knowledge and promptitude a hundred lives may depend? Besides, the soldier risks his life every day, and the clerk does not. Of course it is not hard to understand why soldiers are paid so little. It is part and parcel of the 'close corporation' idea. The army is *par excellence* the profession of gentlemen; it is an honour to be an officer; gentlemen do not want money in order to fight their best; if the pay were raised all sorts of 'bounders' would make soldiering their profession. Probably all this is perfectly true. The present system makes the officers' mess a pleasanter club than it otherwise would be; but another system might find its members far abler soldiers. It is really a question whether the army was made for the officers, or whether the officers were made for the army. At present it appears that the former is the prevalent opinion. That this is not the language of exaggeration is proved by the majority of the appointments to the smartest regiments. Boys are generally jobbed into the R.H.G. or Life Guards without any examination whatever, merely because they have a certain income. The fact that they do not pass any examination is in most cases tantamount to saying that they cannot pass any. These men rise to the command of regiments without the proper equipment of brains and science. Is it wonderful, then, that in actual warfare they are found wanting in everything but pluck?

The undoubted remedy for this unsatisfactory state of affairs is to give commissions only through the ranks to men of proved capacity, and to subject junior officers to searching practical examinations before promotion. In this way commissions would be open to the whole army,

and a capacity to handle men, combined with intelligence and industry, would be the only qualifications required. Of what use is a knowledge of French and German to an officer in Tirah, in the Soudan, in the Transvaal? How much Latin and Greek need he know in order to manipulate English troops? Yet great store is set at Sandhurst and Woolwich by these accomplishments. It is wonderful that dancing and piano-playing are not included in the curriculum. General Hector Macdonald never was at Sandhurst, and yet, from all accounts, he does not seem much handicapped by his loss.

This is a revolutionary suggestion, but it is the only rational way of reforming our army system. In what other profession would social position and money be allowed to override the claims of merit? How would the legal profession prosper if K.C.s—the 'leaders' of the bar—were to fall from the blue into their positions as the guides and mentors of 'juniors' who were at work before they were born? Yet this happens every day in the army. Sergeants and colour-sergeants who have been in a dozen campaigns have to bow before the decrees of a beardless subaltern. This argument would fall to the ground if it could be proved that abstruse knowledge and elaborate theory were the indispensable equipment of an officer. But it is not so. Character, common sense, and experience of war are the only necessary qualifications for a commission. The curse of our present army system is the halo of social effulgence which encircles the officers' mess. Unless a boy has money of his own he cannot go into the 'smart' regiments, for two reasons; the pay is too low, and the standard of living is too high. In truth these 'smart' regiments maintain a high standard of living for the avowed purpose of excluding

undesirable persons. There are desirable poor men and undesirable rich men; but the smart regiments find that the fact that it costs seven or eight hundred a year to live decently within their magic circle helps to maintain their exclusive social standard. Everyone who has been a guest of one of these messes, and who knows its members, will admit that a more delightful set of men cannot possibly be found. As companions at dinner or opponents at polo they are the best fellows in the world. No one will dispute their charm. But though in private life, in 'society' so called, every individual is entitled to form his own society and choose his own friends, it seems anomalous that this principle should be the sole regulating principle for the officering of a public service. It is a relic of the feudal system antiquated by the lapse of time. Until, in short, officers' pay is increased, and mess expenses are cut down to such a point as will enable a penniless sergeant to support a commission with dignity, our system of officering the army will remain rotten.

We are, I fancy, beginning to realise that the under payment of officers, which means running the army 'on the cheap' in peace-time, is counterbalanced by its costliness in war-time. There is no smarter set of officers in the army than the Indian Staff Corps, because the higher pay and the smaller expenses attract men who are at once able and poor. Of course poverty and ability do not necessarily go together, but under the necessary conditions of modern life the vast bulk of the people of this country are prevented by its expenses from looking upon an officer's career as a possible one for a son of brilliant promise. Military glory, with one notable exception, remains the vested interest of the rich, and the best comment on the system

is the number of officers in high command who have recently been degraded for incapacity.

There are several matters connected with army reform, of the first importance, which depend ultimately on the taxability of the country. The War Office seems to imagine that salvation depends upon men, and more men, and still more men ; and they hastily embody fresh regiments of cavalry and infantry, and glory in the fact that, while there are 250,000 troops in South Africa, there are 50,000 more troops in this country than there is barrack accommodation for. Evidently they think much of quantity, and little of quality. My own experience of war leads me to believe that there, as elsewhere, quality is of far greater importance than quantity. For instance, of what use is a regiment, like Rimington's, armed with an obsolete toy of a weapon called the Martini-Metford carbine against Boers armed with Mausers ? I remember once, when we had taken a farmhouse near Brandfort, that the ousted Boers showered bullets all round us from a distance far out of the reach of our poor little pop-guns. Yet, instead of re-arming forces which exist, the War Office plunges into the error of creating new and unneeded regiments. It is all a question of money ; and everybody knows that there is a point at which military expenditure has to end. The question is whether the proper moment to create new regiments is at a time when the most far-reaching re-armament is imperatively needed ? In the matter of guns the Boers were far ahead of us. At Driefontein their two Creusot guns utterly outranged our field-guns, and the infantry attack was exposed to the unmitigated fury of a heavy bombardment. That was very costly, as the Essex and the Yorks and the Welsh know well. The War Office apparently desires to atone

for the quality of its guns by the quantity of its men ; but this policy is neither economical, nor effective, nor humane.

Indeed, it is probable that in the warfare of the future victory will remain with that side which, with the fewest men, can make the most effective use of the largest armament. More men than are actually needed are obviously a drag and a hindrance, as offering targets for the enemy, as providing casualties, as necessitating increased transport of all kinds. An ideal piece of ordnance would be a gun which one man could work, just as one man works a magazine rifle nowadays. The heaviest artillery will in future play a great part in land warfare, and as the range and destructiveness of artillery increase, so will the danger of massing men in close formations. Consequently the number of troops employed must be reduced or the area of conflict must be vastly extended, and the primary necessity of massing artillery on some definite objective will probably induce the former result. Another contributory factor will be the necessity for the commanding officer's personal supervision, for he cannot direct operations extending over an enormous tract of country. Nothing appears (as we gather from despatches) to have more effectually weakened Sir R. Buller's operations in Natal than his habit of delegating his supreme command to a number of divisional commanders, each of whom consequently worked on independent, and, as at Colenso, on mutually hampering lines. However many bullocks there are in a team, there can only be a single driver. It is worth the nation's while to ponder over Lord Salisbury's recent contributions towards the solution of the military problem. They are suggestions, almost tentative suggestions, rather than definite counsels. There is a negative

vagueness about them which almost disappoints. The electioneerer seems to get the better of the statesman. But the public must interpret for themselves the guarded utterances of politicians, and the wisdom and experience of the Premier must not be allowed to fall into the limbo of disregarded *obiter dicta*. In the first place Lord Salisbury admits, without offering any alternative, that our present constitution is not adapted to the production and maintenance of an efficient army. Why did he not, in the plenitude of his acknowledged greatness and power, press on the nation the adoption of some definite, if need be radical, alteration of existing conditions? Who so well qualified as he to direct and form public opinion on a question where the multitude is competent to criticise, but only the master is able to construct? It is a thousand pities that the greatest living Englishman has not thought fit to enlighten us in a positive and direct way as to his views on military reform. In default we must interpret the oracle according to our individual fancy. My own belief is that there is a solution so simple that, like other very obvious things, it has been passed over unnoticed by delving publicists. The Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary for War should be one and the same person, appointed, irrespective of party, for five years, with a seat in the Cabinet, made responsible for every detail of army organisation, and involving in his downfall (for proven incapacity or improvidence) the whole Cabinet. In a word, this is no more than the approximation of our military to our present naval system, with a somewhat safer guarantee of reasonable permanence of tenure.

The cumbrous dualism of the War Office and the Secretary of State is responsible for the whole of our administrative failures. The Commander-in-Chief wants

more guns and better guns ; the Secretary of State consults with the Chancellor of the Exchequer—the Treasury, whose ubiquitous interference Lord Salisbury denounced. The Chancellor of the Exchequer replies that it cannot be done ; he cannot see his way to raise new taxes, country already overburdened ; in view of the impending General Election most unadvisable, &c., &c. Secretary for War thinks of his seat—first in the House, then in the Cabinet, and makes common cause with Chancellor of Exchequer. Result : Commander-in-Chief's application refused, and country and Empire jeopardised.

For the same reason it is at present out of the nation's power to apportion praise or blame between the War Office and the Cabinet. 'Someone has blundered,' but nobody knows who, and nobody is ever likely, under the present system, to find out. Our naval system has been strikingly successful, and probably the factor chiefly contributing to this result is the capacity the public possesses to indict offenders with certainty and justice. There responsibility is allocated and definable, and from the First Lord to a midshipman every officer can be brought to book for dereliction of duty or incapacity. Parliament and the country keep the former up to the mark, courts-martial the latter. But in the army the reverse is the case. The Secretary of State and the War Office bandy accusations, and no man can judge them. Between them they divide authority, and between them they paralyse action. Scandalous blunders in the field are passed over or condoned, and officers retain high commands who in the navy would be court-martialled and degraded. The truth is that the paramount importance of a good navy appeals to all of us, and therefore we take care to get it ; it doesn't matter about the army, we

think, and consequently the service, and the administration of the service, has been suffered to run to seed. The Boer war proves this to have been a mistake on our part. The Premier's second suggestion was rifle clubs. I remember, as we drove many miles in a Cape-cart between Kroonstad and Bloemfontein, that Captain Schomberg McDonnell, of the C.I.V., private secretary to Lord Salisbury, anticipated this opinion, which originally may have been his or may have been the Premier's. To the majority of plain men it does not seem a workable scheme.

Such a purely voluntary or social organisation would lack the discipline essential to the production of an average of shooting. There must be control as well as incentive. The Volunteers supply both, and hence the success of the force at the butts. The real value of the suggestion lies, I think, in its recognition of the paramount, almost exclusive, importance of accurate shooting in modern warfare. Few persons understand this. Soldiers have for centuries relied on drill, pipeclay, and goose-steps, and all the rest of the 'leather and prunella.' This war has conclusively shown that all the time spent on such things is absolutely wasted. The Boers, the C.I.V., the Imperial Light Horse, all the volunteer regiments at the front in short, have abundantly demonstrated that discipline can exist without drill, and that courage and military perception are not the exclusive possession of the much-drilled regular.

The universal recognition of the paramountcy of shooting, as opposed to the paramountcy of drill, foreshadows a revolution in military systems, of which it is difficult to see the end. The bare truth is that nowadays the best shot is the best soldier. Nearly every Englishman

has enough natural courage to enable him to face the dangers of the battlefield without fear. Drill and discipline appear to do little to create or increase courage. In the Boer war, despite the large number of raw and untrained volunteers engaged, the only troops who ran away were regulars. Even supposing that the 'shoulder to shoulder' method inspired bravery, modern extended formations have thrown the individual back upon himself.

In short, the civilian who can shoot straight makes a more useful soldier than the highly drilled and pipe-clayed regular who can't. The value of drill in warfare can be represented by a minus quantity. When troops are on the march they march without any pretence at keeping step. When they go into action they try to forget all the drill they ever learned, and those that forget most fare best. Sometimes their officers march them in close formation (as at Magersfontein) right on to the enemy, and then I suppose the men's curses are divided between the drill system and the promotion system. It can safely be postulated that marksmanship and intelligence are the two great qualifications of the modern soldier. The modern system does nothing to promote intelligence, and devotes much more time to drill than to shooting. The effect of drill on the intelligence may fairly be estimated by the force of habit. A troop-horse after a short training cannot be induced to leave the troop. The effect on his rider's mind is the same; he responds mechanically to the word of command, but his intelligence sleeps. If there is no word of command he does nothing at all; all his officers are killed or wounded; he is helpless.

It appears to have occurred to few thinkers how

vastly the conditions of modern warfare redound to the advantage of industrialism. The performances of Boers and Volunteers, and, last but not least, Reservists, have shown conclusively that the previous uninterrupted practice of so-called soldiering in peace-time is not a necessary preliminary to the formation of a good soldier in war-time. Those who esteem the triumphs of peace above the triumphs of war should take note of this, and if, as I believe, they constitute the majority of our fellow-countrymen, they should lose no time in insisting on the abolition of a system which is obsolete, unnecessary, and detrimental to the wealth and happiness of the country. A rational military system would be a national system, as it is in most Continental countries. The nation's honour and the nation's safety appeal to and concern each individual. Why, then, should not every individual capable of bearing arms sacrifice something for the common weal? For at least a month in every year every man between twenty and twenty-five should go through a course combining a few elementary drill movements, shooting, and practical instruction in scouting, taking advantage of the ground and of cover, riding, elementary tactics, and entrenching. During the remainder of the year, when away from the colours, he should be compelled to do so much shooting as to maintain his proficiency. But the greatest mistake made to-day is in the neglect of the military instinct. Boys take to soldiering as ducks to water, but the popular tendency is to restrain and check this characteristic drift. The army has got a bad name, which is not wonderful. In an ideal community, under an ideal military system, there would be no action more applauded than that of a son of the soil who voluntarily devoted himself to the service of his country. It is for us

to revert to the theory and practice of ancient Sparta, and improve our patriotism *pari passu* with our military system. Every school in the kingdom, public, private, Board, or Voluntary, should be compelled to drill its boys, teach them the mechanism and use of the rifle, riding, and scouting. In this way the soldier boy would become the father of the soldier man; there would be but a short interval between the pastime of his boyhood and the duty of his manhood; and that interval would be bridged over by the sport of rifle contests, to which he would gravitate through the influence of early training. It is idle to speak of rifle clubs to those who are not already Volunteers unless some radical change in our national customs puts rifle shooting and rifle matches on a par with football and cricket matches. We must make the plant indigenous or it will never flourish. Early training and habit will alone secure this result.

Much fictitious importance is ascribed to a 'standing army.' The Boer army is not a standing army, and yet it can mobilise in two days. We do not wish to consider ourselves inferior to the Boers, and therefore what they can do we can do. And there are but few occasions when two days' delay in mobilisation would make much difference. It is significant that the force which we keep to meet the most sudden and most critical of all emergencies—namely, invasion—is not a 'standing' force. It has, besides, no guns and no transport. Yet millions are spent annually on the Volunteers for the purpose of enabling them to drill and shoot, the first of which they do creditably, and the second excellently well. Never was a policy so penny-wise and pound-foolish. Of what use would the Regulars be if they had no guns and no transport? Yet presumably the Volunteers are supposed to be equal to the task of

defending the country without them. In parenthesis I should like to point out certain of the disadvantages under which the Volunteers labour. There would be more and better Volunteers if the Volunteers were regarded as part and parcel of the military system of the country. But public opinion is averse to giving Volunteer officers their rank on account of the low standard reached by the great majority of them in intellect and military knowledge. The men are of better class than the Regulars, and better shots; but the officers, except in a few regiments, with one of which I have the honour of being connected, are the inferiors of Regular officers. This could be altered, and it ought to be altered. Only those passing examinations qualifying for the Regular Army should be appointed; the rank of Volunteer officers should be recognised; discipline should be strictly enforced, and as far as possible the officers should be recruited from men who had seen service. The officers' pay should be the same as that of the Regular officers; in short, the abolition of all distinction between the two classes would have the most beneficial effect on the status and *moral* of the Volunteers. The war has shown us that the Volunteers are of some use, though not in the direction mapped out for them. That eventuality, fortunately, has not yet arisen. But the fact that the nation asked for Volunteers to assist the Regulars proves that, under the bitter stress of defeat and need, the Volunteers are as much part and parcel of our Army as the Regular troops who, during long years of peace, do nothing but drill and pipeclay. It would be good economy, therefore, to make their training and officering as efficient as possible.

It would be good economy also to imitate the Boers, and allow the regular soldiers to return to their civil occupations during ten months of the year. It would be much

cheaper for the country and much better for the men. Officers would then get a little more leave than they do now, but not very much more, perhaps. Study—under supervision—would usefully take the place of parades and stable inspections.

It will be gathered that the net result of these changes would be to establish in this country two forces, similarly officered and similarly trained ; the one (our Regular Army), a force obliged to serve at home and abroad ; the other (the Volunteers), a force obliged only to serve at home. But on occasion, as in this war, men might transfer from the Home Force to the Foreign Force when a great danger threatened the Empire. Of course, in many places, troops will always have to be kept mobilised. India and Gibraltar are examples. The colonies, unless our Little Englanders interfere with their policy, are quite capable of looking after themselves. The history of the Matabili campaign shows that only paucity of numbers prevented the colonists from carrying out by themselves the tasks of punishment and conquest.

In future, Africa's own British children will be numerous enough to overcome either Boers or natives. General Brabant has already expressed the opinion that the future defenders of the colonies should be colonials.

It was obvious to anyone who took part in this war that the colonials were far better fighting material than our own men ; and their knowledge of bush life gave them an advantage which no amount of drilling counterbalanced. Thoughtfulness, independence, the capacity to discriminate between the essential and the accidental—these were the qualities of the average colonial ; qualities which our army system serves only to eradicate.

Any scheme of army reorganisation which would

exclude the colonies would be foredoomed to failure. The war has proved to demonstration that in any vital struggle we must rely on the colonies' help. This being so, it is merely a matter of policy so to co-ordinate our home and colonial military systems as to render them practically homogeneous. Here again colonial influence and example will react, as it has done in other matters, upon the mother country. The colonials cannot and will not subject themselves to the loss of labour and expense entailed by the maintenance of a constantly mobilised army. They will argue, and with convincing force, that their men, notwithstanding their lack of our 'regular' training, have been as competent soldiers in native wars, and recently against the Boers, as any regulars sent to help them. They will point, with just pride, to the achievements of the Canadians at Paardeberg, the Cape Mounted Rifles at Wepener, the Imperial Light Horse at Ladysmith, the Australians and New Zealanders at Sunnyside. Would 'regular' training have added greater lustre to these glorious feats? Those who understand these matters have not hesitated to declare that the colonials' immunity from 'regular' training was the most important factor in their success.

The 'smartest' regiments must throw open their doors to colonial officers, and talented Englishmen must look on a Canadian or African military career as one affording the highest opportunities to the poor and ambitious soldier.

There is no question that leadership in war is the most difficult and responsible position in which a man can be placed. A national system of military education, as advocated so ably by my friend and master, Dr. Warre, is the only efficacious method of discovering and utilising the best military talent of the nation. Just as two scholars of equal cleverness excel, one in Latin prose, another in Latin

verse, so in the conduct of field days and sham fights some boys would discover a talent for tactics so remarkable as to mark them out for soldiers, to the exclusion of any other profession for which previously they might have been destined.

It is almost superfluous to insist on the advantages to the nation of a compulsory national military training. The nation's sense of collective responsibility would be enhanced ; the available number of the Empire's defenders would be vastly increased ; the country would be more secure against invasion ; the month's annual training would immensely improve the physique of the stunted town-dwellers who nowadays know no surcease from toil under enervating and depressing conditions.

The industrial aspect of the scheme is the most remarkable. More than a quarter of a million men who at present are a tax on the community year in and year out would, during eleven months of the year, not only cost the nation merely a trifling sum, but by their labours they would add to the productivity of the country. The release of so many men from the unproductive profession of arms would probably lead to a great increase in emigration to South Africa and our other colonies, where the Imperial military system would still benefit, new lands would be opened up, the natives and Boers would be gradually outnumbered, and labour would be diverted from congested to practically uninhabited areas.

The money saved by these means would be most usefully spent on transport, horses, and guns. As Mr. Winston Churchill said at Plymouth last August, it is a scandal that our Artillery Volunteers should be asked to manipulate the old iron—muzzle-loaders—with which they are expected to fend off invaders from our shores. Horses,

too, are of the first importance. The mobility of the Boers is a fact of such notoriety that it is needless to insist on it. Their superior mobility, in the earlier stages of the war, gave them an advantage which required a force of four to one to overcome. Their mobility was due to the fact that every man was mounted. His horse was a conveyance, not a charger. The Boer was a mounted infantryman, not a cavalryman. It is certain that in future mobility will have to be studied more carefully than it has been by our authorities; for, *ceteris paribus*, the side which can move quickest from point to point, to attack or reinforce, will win. South Africa is the best remount dépôt in the world, and the countrybred the best remount.

Transport is a subject of great complexity, and it is probable that no amount of ingenuity will ever relieve the fighting man of his greatcoat and his rations. But there are vast improvements to be made, by which much suffering and discomfort might be averted. Horses and men are frequently half starved because the lumbering ox- or mule-waggons have been left far in the rear. Horses should in future be used for such draught purposes, and more and lighter vehicles substituted for the cumbrous machines now generally in vogue. The colonials had several splendid covered waggons of a light build, drawn by powerful horses, which proved of inestimable value to their fortunate owners, who never, unlike their comrades, went cold and supperless to bed for want of blankets and 'bully.'

History has shown us that a nation fighting for existence does not rely merely on regular troops. The *Land-sturm* of Prussia in 1813; the *guerrilla* troops of Spain at Baylen; the *francs-tireurs* of France in 1870, are cases in point. The American volunteers in the Cuban war are

yet another instance of the influence of a national emergency on patriotic impulse.

The Boers' success was due to the fact that their military system embraces the whole adult male population. It seems probable that henceforth the intensifying of national feeling due to education, refinement, and a sense of brotherhood as co-inheritors of national traditions, will give every war between white men the character of a life and death struggle. If this be a true view (and the conscription of the Continental Powers gives it colour), it is incumbent on us to make every available man a potential soldier. The struggle may come in India, against the Russian hordes, or in India against revolted subjects striving to apply the education in liberty and progress and self-government which they have been taught to appreciate, but can never use; possibly it may come in England. It has already come in South Africa, and without the help of untrained volunteers from the mother country and the colonies it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the issue would have been defeat. Are we going to allow this lesson to pass, forgotten and unlearned? The only patriotic, the only rational course is to make our defensive power co-extensive with our adult male population. The Yellow Terror menaces the Western world; statesmen of every grade of opinion unite in warning their fellow-countrymen of the unquenchable hatred of our neighbours; and yet not a step is taken in the direction of adding to our military power.

Military experts agree that our guns are antiquated and under strength; the Commander-in-Chief at Aldershot declared publicly that our officers are incapable, after long training, of carrying out simple tactical movements; we are defeated by the 'irregular' Boers, we surrender to the

'irregular' Boers. Never was a regular military system more hopelessly discredited. The one bright spot in the darkened picture is the example of the 'irregular' intelligent soldiery of our children overseas. Unless we can profit by that bright example, the foundations of our greatness are undermined.

To sum up, then, it would appear that (1) the *administration* of the Army would be improved by the abolition of the present dual system. The Commander-in-Chief, the most competent soldier in the Army, would be in his proper place at the head of the Army, in the Cabinet, and solely responsible, during his term of office, to Parliament and the nation. This responsibility to Parliament would be achieved by the practice of creating the Commander-in-Chief a peer. Thus the present strife between the Commander-in-Chief on the one hand, and the Secretary for War and the Treasury on the other, would be avoided. The Commander-in-Chief would state his demands in the House of Lords, and Parliament would consider them. If these demands were negatived (an almost inconceivable eventuality, because governments fall usually for sins of omission rather than commission), the Government would go out of office. But the Commander-in-Chief would remain in the Cabinet of the next Administration, and would again make his demands. If again defeated he would retire.

Such a system would have its difficulties from the constitutional point of view, as tending to give the Commander-in-Chief a power resembling that of a military dictator during his five years of office. But, if we may believe Lord Salisbury, our present constitution is unfitted to the needs of militarism. We can only infer that the change required is in the direction of simplification, the

control of a single hand, and ultimate amenability to responsible criticism. The history of military achievement seems to warrant the inference.

Napoleon, Alexander, and all the other great militarists of the world would hardly have gained their objects unless they had been absolute monarchs. Their absolutism in regard to their armies made them great military administrators; their absolutism as Emperors enabled them to become great conquerors.

The Commander-in-Chief ought to be the first; he could never become the second. Apart from the advantage this change would produce in vesting the control of the Army in a single master-mind, it would most assuredly result in an awakening of national interest in army affairs. There would be no more Parliamentary shirking of grants because the Secretary for War and the Chancellor of the Exchequer had agreed that the Commander-in-Chief was getting too extravagant. When the Commander-in-Chief rose in the House of Lords to discuss army affairs, the nation would understand that a man who was by common consent the ablest soldier in the country, and who had nothing to lose or gain from a change of Ministry, was formulating proposals which were of vital moment to the safety of the Empire. The noxious element of party would be eliminated, and Radicals and Tories would listen with the ears of Britons.

(2) *The Constitution of the Army.*—It appears, on looking back over the history of our country, that there are two classes of war in which we are from time to time engaged—the small war against savages, and the large war against white men.

Our present standing army is quite large enough as it is, too large if the whole of it were efficient (in the late

war 80,000 men of the First Class Army Reserve had to take the place of 100,000 incompetent soldiers), for the purpose of garrisoning India, Malta, Aden, Gibraltar, and the rest. It is large enough for Indian frontier wars, and West African and Soudanese expeditions. But apparently it is not large enough for a war such as that in which we are still engaged.

Supposing, then, that by any misfortune we became at war with Germany or France, or both? It seems absolutely certain that our present army would be ridiculously inadequate. But the present war has shown us the easy remedy.

The present war has shown that men who can shoot make as good soldiers as those who spend several years doing nothing but soldiering.

Sir George White said of the Volunteer Imperial Light Horse, mainly Johannesburg men, that they were the finest body of troops he had ever had the honour of commanding. The C.I.V.s fought every bit as well as the best regular regiments at the front. Our remedy for the smallness of our Regular Army *is to make use of the knowledge that Volunteers can hold their own with Regulars in battle.*

But we must first do away with some absurdities of sentiment and nomenclature.

(1) Every man between twenty and twenty-five should be compelled to serve one month in the year as a soldier, and to practise rifle-shooting at intervals during the remainder. This modified form of conscription would hurt nobody but the Chadbands who advocate State interference in every direction except that on which the existence of the State depends.

(2) The distinction between Militia, Volunteers, and Yeomanry should be abolished. At present the Volunteers

are kept for home defence, and on the first opportunity they are sent to South Africa. At present the Militia and Volunteers are crowds without any of the equipment, transport, guns, and cavalry necessary to make them effective in the field. This seems like a joke on the part of the War Office, and it is wonderful how cheerfully the taxpayers take it.

The only distinction between conscripts should be between those who volunteer for foreign service and those who do not. It is a pity Lord Lansdowne was not allowed to keep this provision in his Volunteers Bill. At present there can be no system in the arrangements for eventualities, because, although the War Office know that a large number of men will volunteer for active service abroad, they cannot tell how many. Every conscript should know his place in the event of a large foreign war or invasion, and should annually be exercised in the field, with the guns, cavalry, and transport which would accompany his unit on the outbreak of war.

The result of these changes would be to reverse the present order of things. The Regulars would be voluntary soldiers; the Volunteers would be conscripts. But the vast majority of our fellow-countrymen are beginning to realise that the patriotic endeavour of the Volunteers has been rendered futile by the imbecility of the War Office. The Volunteer Garrison Artillery are provided with muzzle-loading guns; the Volunteer Riflemen are denied field-guns and transport. At the present time the vast majority of our young men look favourably on volunteering. Public opinion is on the side of military service—the minimum of service compatible with reasonable efficiency. Let the Government take advantage of this wave of feeling, and set the seal of legality on patriotism.

After all, such conscription would be just as welcome as tithes and compulsory vaccination, and it is certain that it would be less of a hardship, and of incalculably greater national advantage than either of those compulsory measures. For thus the Volunteer would get what he wants—discipline, good officering, and the organisation to make him part of an army, and not of a crowd, in the event of a war large enough to necessitate his services. Why? Because now the War Office cares nothing whether the Volunteers are efficient or not; but conscripts are not volunteers, and the War Office would take very good care to carry out the nation's will as expressed in a law imposing military service on the manhood of the country. It seems reasonable to suppose that if foreign nations endure conscription for every man for three years, Britain could support it for a month a year for five years. In countries where Socialism and Anarchism are far more rife than in this country the military systems seem to offer no target to the revolutionary.

On the one hand we hear statesmen like Lord Salisbury and Lord Rosebery elaborating the dangers of our position and the hatred of our neighbours; and on the other we hear complacent remarks concerning the Militia Ballot, and its use in the unlikely event of the fulfilment of the prophecies of these alarmists. If the dangers do exist, and I for one think that the Boer War is sufficiently a case in point, there can be no comparison between a nation trained for years to shoot and drill, and a nation suddenly called on to provide targets for the enemy's bullets.

We cannot eat our cake and have it, and if we would preserve our Empire, and be ready also to take part in European struggles, we must consent to national sacrifices both of time and money.

THE ETERNAL KAFFIR

ACQUAINTANCE almost inevitably develops a sneaking kindness. There is a great deal that is very likeable about a nigger. Shining, smiling, lit up with sporadic colour-patches, he dawdles through life with a contentment and a frugality that constitute a perpetual object-lesson to the civilised philosopher. Sunshine, a blanket, a few handfuls of corn, and a little tobacco are the sum of his needs. Diogenes has acquired a great reputation, with probably the least expenditure of energy ever unconsciously devoted to the acquisition of that elusive article, merely by having inferentially expressed his opinion that there is nothing in the world better worth having than sunshine. Every Kaffir is in this respect a Diogenes, and entitled to his reputation. But such is the unaccountable inconsistency of mankind that the opinion which elevates Diogenes to a notable position amongst philosophers is held to be proof positive of the nigger's unmitigated savagery. In fact, Diogenes was a great man, and the nigger is only a lazy beast. Throughout South Africa he is known as 'boy.' Whatever the precise origin of the term, it is wonderfully appropriate. Years do not seem to chill the black man's blood, nor abate the perennial flow of his spirits; all his life, in instincts and intellect, he is a boy. He is the universal drudge; the white man is 'baas' to him because he is a white man;

he is the servant of the English, and the Boers' slave. He never rises above menial occupations ; he is a miner, a digger, a cowherd, a milkman, a guarder of horses ; he has not the industry to learn a trade and work at it. His daughters help white women in their household work, act as servants in hotels, and waitresses at railway stations ; 'Hi, Snowdrop, get me some more beef!' cried my hungry Bengal Lancer friend with unintelligible irony to a damsel dark as Erebus. In the towns the Kaffirs live apart in their own 'location,' a miniature town of tiny mud-walled, iron-roofed houses, wherein each house is numbered legibly. The broad streets of the location swarm with dogs of every breed, for the Kaffir loves dogs above all created things, and will steal them, whatever the penalty. One of the prettiest sights I saw in the whole course of the loveless campaign was a young and handsome Kaffir playing with a puppy. Every few seconds, in the exuberance of his affection, the man would seize the dog and hug and kiss it, murmuring endearments in the musical language of his race. The Kaffir's love of, and fine natural eye for, harmonies of colour, is one of his salient characteristics. Every blanket is, if possible, a gaudy blending of warm reds and ochres. One Sunday I saw in Bloemfontein a young and dapper Kaffir who wore in his buttonhole a carnation which exactly matched the scarlet of the riband round his billycock hat. The solitary Kaffir lives in a hut the shape of an inverted basin, wattled with reeds or thatched with skins. Karosses are his covering and his bed—the skins of antelopes and other animals carefully sewn together with sinews, and rendered by incessant kneading as soft and pliant as when they were alive. The dust-bin and the dumping-ground furnish him with some of his most prized possessions. I have seen old kerosene oil-

tins ranged wall-like round the arena devoted to the cocks and hens, tended and watched by their complacent owner as white men tend and watch the rarest flowers. His wealth consists in cattle, sheep, goats, or horses, and a small tract of ground is cultivated with his staple food—Kaffir corn, or durra. This plant much resembles maize in its habit, but the seeds are infinitely smaller. When ripe they are dried and pounded between two stones into flour, of which a sort of bread is made. The cereal is also used in the manufacture of beer. This liquid is very thick, and of a whitish colour, with an exceedingly sour flavour. Kaffirs are extravagantly fond of it, and Europeans who have acquired the taste will tell you that it is sustaining and wholesome. I tried some in the Kimberley mine location on a very hot day, and was obliged to excuse my subsequent behaviour by quoting Dr. Johnson, on a similar occasion: ‘A fool, sir, would have swallowed that.’

Cattle form an essential part of a Kaffir household, for, as in ancient days, they form the current medium of exchange. A young man works until he can buy sufficient head of cattle in order to pay for a wife. If he is rich enough he buys two wives. He never walks if he can ride, and one of the commonest of South African sights is a Kaffir in trousers, with bare feet thrust in rusty irons, sjamboking a lean-ribbed Rosinante along a dusty track. Colonists are usually very sceptical as to the Kaffir's title to his horse, and no doubt a great proportion of them are stolen. But probably the savage's natural tendency to disregard the distinction between *meum* and *tuum* has not received much check from the example of his white masters. In his opinion the white man has stolen his land, his game, his freedom. What is a paltry horse or two thrown into

the opposite scale? There can be no question that the Boers' brutality to the natives has induced the belief in minds accustomed to regard a white man as a white man that Europeans generally are grasping, treacherous, and cruel. Burned alive in their caves by men who ostentatiously paraded their reliance on God, harried, beaten, and despised, it is small wonder that the remnant of Malaboch's people should look askance at Christianity and secretly hate the men who practise brutalities under cover of its name. Magato's people were burned in like manner by Mr. Kruger's orders. Those who know how fast news travels in savage countries will understand how widely diffused among the other black races is the knowledge of these inhuman atrocities. The risings in Mashonaland and Matabililand are undoubtedly to be traced to the fear inspired by the presence of the white strangers, a fear generated solely by the conduct of the Boers towards the Kaffirs. Tribes, like the Basutos, who have had the opportunity of discriminating between Boer and British methods, were only prevented by force from combining with the British against the foes of their race. This is the best evidence of the extent and rigour of Dutch persecution; for the niggers have no particular reason for loving the British. In war with the latter they have lost all that they prize most; and in the struggle between the two white races they have been exposed to all the dangers and hardships without any of the compensations of war. This was very clearly demonstrated in the recent campaign. Frequently their cattle, sheep, and horses were driven off by marauding parties of either army; occasionally an army bivouacked round their huts. Then, indeed, they fared badly. At Ortell's farm some Kaffirs had a large flock of goats herded within a thorn *zariba*. The

army bivouacked around them, and in five minutes the thorn fence had been dragged away for firewood, and every single goat was squealing in the embrace of a hungry trooper. Near the lazaretto, some three miles out of Bloemfontein, a Kaffir lived in his wattled hut. Troops were sent to the lazaretto, and a few days later all that remained of the hut was a broken tangle of grass and sticks. Such being the Kaffir's experience of white men, it is not surprising that his moral code is bounded by the *Lex Talionis*—an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. The seamy side of life is the side the white man has generally shown him, and the burden of the white man lies heavy upon him.

It is remarkable that the Kaffir treasures no feelings of injury. His childlike mind forgets and forgives. He is incapable of nice distinctions. As one white man is, to him, the same as another white man, so the intemperate bullying of one blackguardly European seems to him as much a necessity of civilisation as the reasonable demands of a kindly master. He accepts kicks and blows as the inevitable concomitant of national defeat, and never dreams of discussing a thrashing on its own merits. This attitude unfortunately tends to stiffen the savagery of low-caste whites. It would be better if a nigger knew when he deserved a hiding and when he didn't.

The very advantages the Kaffir possesses over white men only serve to lower him in their eyes. The obtuseness of his sense of smell and the strength of his stomach are both held to be evidences of his degradation. And yet what would most of us not have given to have been able to snuff up dead horse without a qualm? Who would not be glad to have the faculty of devouring putrid meat with relish and advantage? There are occasions when

such food is the only food obtainable, and then the Kaffir thrives where the white man starves.

At a distance a Kaffir is decorative, at close quarters he is smelly. One of the most picturesque of local glimpses is that which greets the traveller happening on some drift of a secluded spruit. The green stream flows slowly between yellow banks; brilliant mimosas—a chequer of green and flowery gold—shoot their fringed branches into the azure of the sky; in the foreground dark coppery figures—*βαθύκολλοι*, *solutis zonis*—sit washing rainbow-coloured garments, or sporting with the flood in every unsuspecting attitude of female grace. But intimate dealings with Kaffirs tend to exasperate the temper and shorten life. He is dirty, lazy, and a liar. On the other hand, he is good-humoured; capable, under supervision, of any amount of work; brave, and, if well treated, as faithful and affectionate as a dog.

It is the custom to speak of all natives as ‘Kaffirs’; but it must not be supposed that there are no variations between different tribes. The ‘Cape boy,’ a half-caste Hottentot, is a much worse specimen, physically and intellectually, than the robust and athletic up-country Zulu. The Basuto, as far as I know him, is superior to the Zulu. The Major had a Basuto servant called Bill, who, in mind and manners, seemed in no respect inferior to the ordinary European, and in industry and capacity for work he was the superior of any white man I ever came across. He dressed in dark European clothes, and if he had been white instead of black he would have been considered a good-looking fellow. His gleaming teeth were always showing in a good-humoured grin, and as a mess-waiter and body-servant he did two ordinary men’s work. He spoke English well, and seemed, in short, possessed of all the

qualities required for successful competition with Europeans in their own fields of activity. There is at present, and always will be, every facility for such men to rise to any and every position for which they are qualified ; but in my opinion it is a mistake to try to cram literary education down the throats of the only body of men who are competent to do necessary unskilled work. The native can tend flocks and herds all day under the summer sun and take no hurt ; the average colonist cannot, and, even if he could, he has more important work to do. Of what advantage would a literary education be to a Kaffir swineherding ? We must never forget that the whites are a mere handful among teeming thousands of blacks, and that the majority of these latter are fighting races who have been subdued only at the point of the bayonet. Under certain conditions they will be quite ready to fight again. The enthusiast of Exeter Hall is doing his best to create those conditions. He would have the Kaffir treated as the white man's equal ; he would encourage him to ape European habits and manners ; he would Christianise him ; he would educate him. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? It is as though you would teach a child of six the binomial theorem.

Make the Kaffir the white man's equal and you at once do away with the necessary system of segregation, inspection, licences, fixed wages,—necessary because the Kaffir is a born thief, and the law must be beforehand with him. Encourage him to copy European civilisation, and he adopts its vices without adopting its virtues. Send missionaries to him, and he discards the primitive but binding safeguards of his tribe and race in favour of the elastic dictates of his own volition. Educate him, and the logic of statistics and the pride of knowledge point him out as the future lord of

the Dark Continent. I will give you a concrete illustration of what I mean. By Kaffir customary law a bridegroom is bound to pay so many cattle to his future father-in-law as the price of his virgin bride ; but no cattle can be demanded for a girl who is not a virgin. Consequently Kaffir parents look closely after their daughters' morals. But the missionary appears on the scene and declares that it is unchristian to buy your wife and sell your daughter, and the custom, no doubt with the bridegroom's approval, lapses among the converted. The father-in-law is not so delighted with the new state of affairs, and he finds a remedy in prostitution. As in Japan, the greed of gold swamps every natural moral consideration. '*Si possis, recte : si non, quocunque modo rem.*' So here resides the difference between the heathen and the Christianised native ; the former derives profit from his daughter's marriage, the latter from her dishonour.

As in India, so in Africa, the bulk of the natives must be treated as children, kindly but firmly, and encouraged along the slow and narrow groove of peaceful industry. The eradication of the plundering instinct is not a mere day's work, and sociologists may find matter for satisfaction in the gradual but permanent tendency of the Kaffirs to earn an honest livelihood by their own labour. In a few hundred years their character may have become so modified by contact with civilisation as to justify the introduction of the Exeter Hall programme.

At present, in respect of rules and regulations for their location, identification, tracing and hiring, we have much to borrow from the Boer system. In Johannesburg a Kaffir walks in the roadway ; in Cape Town he jostles you off the pavement. If we are to possess the courage of our convictions, if we are to act as though we believe that we

are what we so often and so loudly proclaim that we are—the greatest colonising nation that the world has ever seen—the Chosen People of Progress : then, merely in order to maintain our own existence and the existence on alien soil of all that we class under the term civilisation, we must act as that other Chosen People acted of old time, and make and keep the original Amalekites our hewers of wood and drawers of water. There is no *via media* ; these black men will be your masters or they will be your servants ; they can never be your equals under the law.

The object-lesson of China, with its missionaries, its massacres, and its make-believe civilisation, is before us. Think well over it, you best-of-intentioned social enthusiasts, who would approach the black races with a Bible in one hand and a flag of liberty in the other, for this is the bald and disheartening truth : Make the black men your equals and you make them your masters ; and then the half-ripened fruits of example fall untimely into the quagmire of lust and pillage and blood.

THE BOER'S LIFE

STENCH, flies, dust, discomfort, dirt : these are the almost universal characteristics of the Boer's home within. Without it is a plain rough-baked brick or mud-walled oblong structure, roofed with corrugated iron, and devoid of the smallest attempt at architectural beauty. The stoep or verandah shades at least one side of the house ; possibly a willow or a gum-tree or two grow hard by ; rarely, very rarely, there is a ring-fenced plot of garden, wherein unkempt rose-bushes eke out a forlorn existence.

The arrangement of rooms is the same in nearly all cases. A central room or hall usurps half the house. In it the family lives and has its meals. Opening off the hall, two or three bedrooms, where beings of all ages and both sexes herd promiscuously, and a room used as a dairy complete the house.

You might naturally expect to find some handsome old furniture, but with the exception of two or three highly polished warming-pans, and some brass candlesticks, I never came across anything in the least attractive. The centre table is generally shoddy modern deal, and the chairs are invariably the black-wooded, cane-bottomed, curved-legged creations of Germany. Harmoniums are fairly common amongst the well-to-do, and the ponderous Bible is ubiquitous. Villainous family photographs, a little china, and a gaudy almanac, whereon pictures of Kruger, Steyn, Sir H. de Villiers, and, *mirabile dictu*, Mr. Rhodes, were

displayed with unvarying monotony—these seemed to constitute in nearly every case the decorative ideal. The usual type of Boer is a big, gaunt, hairy man, with an expression indicating determination, sensuality, and cunning. Amongst the upper strata of society, such as members of the Volksraad, there are many faces of the intellectual type; but the country Boers, as distinct from the town-bred Hollanders, display a uniformity of low-caste feature which is very remarkable to the observer accustomed to the fine expression of many of our peasantry. Few of the men have the ruddy colour natural to their open-air life, while the women are all pallid and sickly-looking. The latter are occasionally handsome, but for the most part they are dull-eyed, flabby, and uninteresting. As girls they wear very short skirts and a pigtail; as *vrouws* they put up their hair and develop *embonpoint*. From various reliable sources of information, I gathered that both immorality and incest are terribly prevalent amongst the Boers, for which their manual idleness, want of intellectual occupations, and overcrowding are no doubt chiefly responsible.

Apart from sensuality, coffee-drinking and tobacco appear to be the men's only pleasures. Drunkenness is apparently rare, and there is no distinctively national intoxicant. *Dop*, or Cape brandy, is not a national Boer drink as beer is a national British drink. Coffee is the Boer's beer. The co-existence of a distinctive immorality and a distinctive teetotalism goes far to disprove the cant teetotal argument that alcohol is responsible for every vice. The personal habits of the Boers are very repugnant to cleanly persons. They seldom change or wash their clothes; they do not bathe. A mother considers that she has discharged her ablutionary duty to

her children if she begins the day by rubbing their faces over with a dish-clout. I am credibly informed that they generally sleep in their day clothes, and that pumpkins, onions, potatoes, and all sorts of vegetable produce are stored under their beds. My friend and trooper Pat Nolan told me the following story :—On a journey he stopped for a day at a Boer farm. The owner was a man of colossal dimensions, and his *vrouw* was equally huge. Early next morning the fat old woman rolled out of her bedroom to prepare breakfast. She began by kneading some dough, with which she presently departed towards her bedroom, leaving the door open, so that Pat was made an involuntary spectator of the proceedings. The old gentleman was still in bed, snoring. The *vrouw* turned down the bedclothes, inserted the dough, and returned to the astonished visitor. Interrogated by Pat as to the reason for her extraordinary conduct, the old lady ingenuously declared that she was making bread, and that nothing made the dough rise better than a warm bed.

When the Boer is not sitting on his stoep, drinking coffee and smoking, he is in the saddle. The conditions of his life render continuous occupation impossible. He rides round his farm and looks at his sheep and cattle ; if he has a patch of arable under oats, he has a little more work than his neighbour who has none. In former days buck-shooting provided the *vortrekker* with a pastime, an occupation, and a means of livelihood ; but the gradual extinction of the game has left his descendants idler and worse shots. The women, on the other hand, are quite as industrious as the men are idle. They have their cooking and rudimentary cleaning to do ; they make clothes and sun-bonnets ; they milk the cows and make the butter.

Indeed, the Boer woman is of a quite Amazonian turn,

and is frequently the better horse of the two, as so often happens in the case of effete stocks. The women followed their mankind into the battle-fields, and in many cases they are known to have gone into the trenches. At Magersfontein there was a certain laager set apart for the women, which was easily recognisable after their evacuation of the position by the presence of female garments, parasols, and a prodigious quantity of white feathers—the stuffing of innumerable quilts. There and at Paardeberg their shell-proof rabbit-burrows were most skilfully contrived; at Magersfontein by the grouping of huge stones behind or between rocks, at Paardeberg by tunnellings scooped out of the loamy river-banks. There were even little children at Paardeberg; I remember a group of them standing on a waggon and calmly surveying that scene of horror, with the stench of putrescent carcases in their nostrils, and the groans of wounded kinsmen in their ears. Inside the charred ring of waggons a girl was walking about unconcernedly with her arm in a sling; she had been wounded by a splinter of shell. Another very pretty girl in that awful laager was asked what the bombardment had felt like. She replied, ‘For your lyddite I care not at all: I shake my skirt, so; but to live the life of a mere-cat, *that* is horrible!’ Those who witnessed the terrific howitzer bombardment of the laager are in a position to appreciate the bravery of that girl who despised lyddite; and it is certain that the Boer women are generally very courageous. A characteristic story is told of a *vrouw* who said to her husband, ‘Go and fight; I can get another husband, but not another Free State.’ On one occasion I was sent to commandeer some horses from a farm on our line of march. The owner was there—a big man of nearly seventy, who told

us that he would have been fighting had he not been ruptured. His daughter, a huge and not uncomely dame of forty, was the chief speaker and general manager. When I told her that the two grey driving-horses would be commandeered, and a receipt given for 36*l.* for the pair, she burst into a storm of tears and denunciations. The horses had cost 60*l.* the pair; they were her only driving-horses; God would punish the damned English for their robbery and violence. And so on, with large libations of salt tears and a *crescendo* of curses. The old man sat by silent while his daughter raved. Perhaps he was thinking of his President's spontaneous aggression; perhaps of his two sons and a son-in-law fighting at that moment against the *rooinek*s. But the lady's political ignorance stood her in good stead. It was in vain that I attempted, by means of an interpreter, to bring home to her the fact that the compulsory purchase of two horses was not a very severe punishment for complicity in an unprovoked invasion of British territory, and the slaughter of British soldiers. I gently hinted that the burning of the farm might be a more suitable recompense; the good *vrouw* redoubled her fervent comminations.

There can be no question that the ignorant fanaticism of the women has done much to stiffen Boer aggression and Boer resistance. Where national success depends upon promptitude and boldness, the constant girdings of unlettered women are of more value than the reasoned counsels of statesmen. The Boer woman—strong, fierce, and uncompromising—is a force to be reckoned with in the future settlement of South Africa.

As for ignorance, it would, perhaps, be impossible to find any white people so egregiously unlearned as the Boers. The ordinary Boer obtains the franchise and all

the rights of a citizen by knowing how to sign his name. He learns mechanically, therefore, how to trace out the meaningless hieroglyphic which he is told represents his written name.

A rather better class of Boers go to school for a year, learn from schoolmaster and *predikant* how best to hate and despise the English, and return, in the full-blown conceit of superior knowledge, to the bosom of their families. For instance, at Bloemfontein my friend, Mr. Thomas Smith, who was appointed by Lord Roberts assessor of damages done to Boer property, showed me a claim as follows: 'To hire of Cape-cart sent from Bloemfontein to Ortell's Farm (so many miles) to bring back body of son killed in action; to coffin for same; to burial expenses of same, 57*l*.'

A gunboat broke her back on some mud-bank near Lourenço Marques. A number of Boers promoted a company for the purpose of buying the gunboat, floating her off, and commissioning her for the taking of London and the capture of the Queen. A Boer had saved a couple of thousand pounds. He was about to go on a far journey, and had heard that banks were to be trusted. He went with his hoard to the nearest bank and stated his case. 'How much will you charge for looking after all this money for a year?' asked the Boer. 'We shall charge you nothing; on the contrary, we shall allow you interest at three per cent.' The Boer at once smelt a supposititious rat; the arrangement was far too good to be honest; his money would be safer buried. And so he left the bank with his stocking in his pocket. Pat Nolan told me that he once had a fight in the street with a Boer who insulted him, and he knocked him out. A zarp came up and took Pat into custody. When the prisoner came up for sentence, the defeated one, with a very black eye, was in

court, gloating over the details of his enemy's discomfiture. When Pat was finally sentenced to pay a fine of 3*l.*, the Boer's joy knew no bounds. He sat in court grinning and chuckling. Cases were brought on and decided ; the Court was about to close ; but still the Boers sat on. At last someone asked him what he wanted. ' I want that 3*l.* the magistrate fined the *verdomte Englander.*' When he fully realised that the money would never go into his pocket, he broke out into a torrent of abuse, in which President Kruger, the Law Courts, the social system, and his own birthday were severally and jointly consigned to perdition.

Personally I never came across any instances of Boer cruelty, and, from what I have gathered from wounded men who fell under their care, they showed the utmost kindness to their enemies. But the Boer mind is essentially an *esprit borné*. He behaves humanely towards those whom he considers his equals, but towards his inferiors—the Kaffir and dumb animals—he too often acts inhumanly. He has not the balanced intellect which recognises no distinctions in the application of kindness. The following facts were given me by eye-witnesses :—

(1) A month before Lord Roberts marched into Bloemfontein a Boer drove a team of four horses towards the level crossing over the railway line. Two of the horses jibbed, and the man got down and flogged them till they sank down and died. He cut them loose, and went on with the remaining two.

(2) Another Boer flew into a rage with his horse, flogged it till it fell, and then went back to his house for a knife, and cut off its head. On his 'boy' expostulating, the Boer pursued him with the knife.

(3) Not long ago a baker in Bloemfontein flogged his horse so unmercifully that it died the next day.

(4) One of my Kaffir servants was a boy named Piet. He was hunchbacked and lame, besides being phthisical. I asked him one day how he came to be lame. He told me that a Boer master had forced him with a whip to get on a savage horse that had already thrown him. He got on, and was again thrown in such a way that his back and side received irremediable injuries. 'I have two holes this way, and another this way,' said the poor fellow, pointing to his thigh and shoulder-blade.

(5) A Boer found on the battle-field a locket on the neck of a dead officer, in which was a photograph of two little children, with the legend, 'Wishing dear Dad a happy Christmas.' The Boer scrawled on the locket, 'You'll never see your dear Dad any more,' and it passed from hand to hand until it came into the possession of a notorious shopkeeper of Bloemfontein, now in prison at Capetown. This man gave it to his wife, who wore it until she lost it in the street. There it was found by one of our men, and identified.

(6) The following incident came under my own observation:—When the owners deserted Ortell's Farm they carried off all they could lay their hands on. But their faithful dogs were left to starve, or to be at the tender mercies of the British. The poor creatures—a fox terrier and a spaniel—were wandering about in search of food, and unless we had come up when we did they must have died of starvation.

The bravery and tenacity of the Boers are unquestionable. They retain unimpaired the old bombastic fighting mood which prompted Van Tromp to nail a besom to his masthead, and swear to sweep the English off the seas. Their contempt for shell-fire was in many instances most remarkable, and their hatred of the British led them into profundities of agony and self-denial.

At Enslin a Boer was blinded by a bullet which cut out both his eyes. When the wretch realised that a British surgeon was dressing him, he bit and kicked and fought with all his might. He preferred excruciating pain to the degradation of relief at the hands of his mortal foe. It is related of ex-President Kruger that in his youth, during a hunting expedition, far from medical help, he sustained an injury to one of his fingers which resulted in mortification. Kruger realised the state of affairs, and calmly cut off the finger with his hunting knife.

The dogged persistence of the Boers appeals especially to those who took part in the war against them, and realised the futility of their resistance. Overwhelmed by numbers, beaten at every point, routed and dispersed, they slunk quietly home, buried their rifles, and came into market with vegetables and butter for the British, ostentatiously parading an antiquated musket through the streets till it finally was handed over to the Provost Marshal. Directly a new commando was organised the whilom farmer dug up his rifle and went off to the wars again. I remember on one occasion taking a patrol to some farms not far from the Boers' laager. We were received hospitably, and entertained with sour milk and coffee, rusks and quinces. Together we discussed the political situation. One of our hosts had escaped from Cronje's force shortly before it was surrounded, and made his way home, but his son had been taken prisoner and sent to Capetown. He asked if he would be able to get letters through to St. Helena, and made various inquiries as to how we should treat the Boers there. Finally we parted, the best of friends, and our patrol rode home. Next day a patrol from another corps went out in the same direction, and when they got within a short distance

of these identical farms they were received with a fusillade, and had to retire.

This little episode illustrates two very marked Boer traits—hospitality and unreliability. However much a Boer may dislike a Britisher, he seldom or never refuses him hospitality. I have been told of a few instances, immediately prior to the outbreak of war, where Boer national arrogance and hatred seemed to have got the better of innate courtesy to strangers, culminating even in the refusal to allow the watering of horses at the dam, or the halting of a waggon on the farm. But such cases are rare. All colonists are agreed that the Boers are hospitable. They are also agreed that they are double-faced liars. You can rarely depend on a Boer's word. Mr. Kruger's promises of equal privileges for the Uitlanders to Sir E. Wood in 1881 were flagrantly broken; recently he has paid his own burghers in worthless paper-money. Most of the Boers are as 'slim' as their President, and they never allow a bargain or a promise to stand in the way of their interests.

And yet, with all their acknowledged national failings, there are a few Englishmen, long resident among them, who love the Boers. An English parson, a dignitary of the Church, would not go into the streets to welcome his fellow-countrymen when they marched victorious into Bloemfontein. 'I know that England is in the right,' he said to me; 'I have realised for a long time that this was bound to come, but I have lived for thirty years amongst the Boers, and I love them.' I could not extract any more particular enunciation of the why and the wherefore; the good man was visibly moved by the sudden downfall of the prosperous little State in which he had spent the best part of his life; he keenly felt for the

wounded national pride of the Free Staters. Politically his remarks are valuable as showing that, with full knowledge and no bias, an educated man had convinced himself that Boer nationalism was bound to go, and ought to go. Perhaps his cloth helped him to the conclusion.

As far as I, with my brief opportunities, could discover, the Boer religion is the narrowest and least elevating form of Christianity ever preached since the days of Alva. In truth it is not Christianity ; it is Pentateuchism. The Boers reproduce the conditions of the patriarchal age. The application of the Law is convenient ; the Gospel would be a dramatic anachronism. All the fierceness of Old Testament massacre is adopted in their conduct of native wars. The Swazis and the Amatongas are the Amorites and the Hittites over again. The domesticated natives are the Amalekites. The Assyrians are the British. St. Helena is Babylon. The reason of their downfall is the same : like the Jews, they preferred the letter of the old Law to the spirit of the new Love, which includes truth and justice and equity ; and, like the Jews, the irresistible wave of human progress, assimilating governmental methods to ethical ideas, swept them into nothingness.

There is yet another interesting historical analogy. The *predikants*, or parsons, like the Jewish prophets, took a foremost part in stirring up military ardour and inflaming national passions. The schoolmasters sowed ; the *predikants* watered ; the field cornets reaped the increase. I was assured, by men who had ample opportunity of judging, that for years the schoolmasters, by systematic historical perversion, had trained their children to believe that British power was a myth, and that all South Africa lay at the mercy of the Boers.

That the Boers generally were saturated with this

belief is certain. On no other hypothesis can you explain the insolent confidence of their words and actions. Religious tendencies and national pretensions were fused in a pervading conviction that victory must attend the Chosen People. I read a letter which was picked up by one of our men near Abraam's Kraal. The following passage occurred in it :

'Koorpoort, February 23, 1900.

'For some days the most awful chaos prevailed amongst our people, especially the Transvaalers. Many of them fled, and General De Wet smashed a big sjambok over them to keep them back. Poor man, he simply cried afterwards from sheer vexation. He was completely done up. Last (night?) General De Wet, with the many reinforcements we have got, attacked the enemy to relieve General Cronje, and with God's help. . . .' (Letter unfinished).

There is an eloquence in this aposiopesis which approaches the divine. It is as though Providence would declare to the world that He resented this partisan invocation. For God did not vouchsafe His help to the Boers ; and these simple folk, who so blindly attribute their success or failure to the direct purpose of the Deity, must have looked upon the coincidence of Cronje's surrender with 4,500 men on Majuba Day as a plain and certain sign that God had turned away from them the former beneficent light of His countenance. The end has come ; and already the Boers are remodelling their conceptions of life and duty. For, strange as it may sound, and at variance with their most pronounced characteristics, the Boers are of all peoples the most easily led. My friend, Mr. Smith of Bloemfontein, insisted that the Boer *vrouw* was a more docile pupil in the matter of butter-making

and cheese-making than the British farmer's wife. She was more adaptive, less prejudiced. To this fact—the submission of unlettered empiricism to science—we must look confidently for the future hegemony of British methods and British ideas. The Boer of to-day is the natural product of his training and environment. Eliminate these two factors, and men who know will tell you that the raw article is malleable and ductile, and as clay in the hands of the potter. The lies of the schoolmaster, the frenzied goadings of the *predikant*, must be silenced for ever. Given a rigorous treason law and twenty years, and the two new British Colonies will be as violently loyal and British as French Canada. The Boers will make good subjects, but they would have proved bad masters. It is a far cry to South Africa, and the settled morality of an old country has no hold there. The perpetual leaven of British immigration will drag the Boers up ; the standstill decadence of Boer tradition would have dragged the British down.

OURS AND OTHERS'

'I GUESS there'll be a bit of a cough-drop for the rest of this puff.' In such mysterious language did a brother-officer convey to me his belief that some slight ill-feeling would exist between himself and the members of another regiment for the remainder of the campaign. The circumstances certainly appeared to warrant his contention. He had gone out early one morning from the Modder River, and had come across three horsemen whom he took to be Boers. He at once got down and 'salivated' them at six hundred yards. The supposed Boers turned out to be the colonel of the Yorkshire Regiment and his two orderlies, who identified my friend by the tiger-skin round his hat. The sentence illustrates the divergency of type to be met with in Rimington's. Here was a well-bred Englishman, thirty years resident in South Africa, who spoke a sort of English almost unintelligible to the average Englishman fresh from the old country. The language of the colonial-born Britisher is even more esoteric. 'That'll do, Sergeant Jones,' I heard one of our colonial officers remark; 'I don't want any more of your back-chat.' I puzzled for some time over the phrase before I discovered it meant 'repartee' or 'answering back.' Food, with the colonials, was always 'skoff'; a malingerer was never anything but a 'skrim-shanker.' Such weird terms and their like were common to all—even the men fresh from home fell quickly into the way of them; but beneath the language there lay an

extraordinary diversity of character, status, and culture. There were dukes' sons and there were cooks' sons. At any rate there was a man, a common trooper, who was the grandson of a former governor of the colony and descended from a duke—a huge kindly giant, with his breeding stamped on his face and his actions; there was a demon-faced blackguard well known in Johannesburg as a card and billiard sharper; there was a corporal who acted as correspondent for the *Daily Graphic*, and whose articles were as good bits of description of real fighting as anything that left South Africa by post; there was a sergeant with about fourteen initials in front of an assumed name, who admitted that he was better than he appeared to be, and no better than he should be, for which latter reason he found it convenient occasionally to vary his signature—an olive-skinned, black-moustached dare-devil, with the round head and piercing eye of the true Celt. This man, who became at one time sergeant of my troop, told me that he spent his life hurrying from one fight to another, and when there was no fighting worth the name going on in a pacific world he was in the habit of taking a little house in Wales, wherein the reading of Welsh history and the drinking of sparkling Burgundy constituted his favourite pastimes. I frequently had discussions with him on some abstruse historical point, and I became more and more astonished at the appalling profundity of the man's erudition. One day I remarked that Wales had not yet found her historian, and my sergeant replied, 'No; and there are only three men alive capable of writing it.' 'I think I know two of them,' I answered. 'One is my old tutor, O. M. Edwards, of Lincoln College, Oxford, and another is Professor Rhys.' 'You are perfectly right,' replied my sergeant; 'and the third is myself.' This

wonderful man was, after my dear friend Hubert Howard, the bravest man I ever came across. He volunteered on every occasion for the most risky work, and he took a real pleasure in courting danger. There was a belief in the regiment that for some reason or other he was unhappy, and that he had come out to Africa to try to put an end to himself. But for this theory to be good he must have developed unhappiness at a very early age; for on his own confession he had fought in nearly every campaign of the last twenty years. His method of getting out to Africa was characteristic. He arrived in England from the ends of the earth, and determined to go out to the war by the first ship. He rushed off to Southampton, and found that the vessel on the point of sailing was cram-full. He could not get a passage for love or money, so he determined to employ other means. On the quay he came upon a second-class passenger a good deal the worse for liquor. He bumped against him, apologised, and began a conversation on the strength of the introduction. The second-class passenger needed but little pressing when an adjournment to a bar was suggested; there my friend the sergeant made him speechless drunk, noted the time, took his ticket out of his pocket, and left for the boat at the last minute. Not requiring two lots of luggage, he gave the second-class passenger's effects to the steward, and was consequently very well waited on all the way to Capetown.

Then there was V., belonging to one of the oldest families in England, who, I suppose, had quarrelled with his bread-and-butter some time or another—a refined gentleman of the best sort, yet a common trooper in ours, having to consort on a footing of equality with the Johannesburg swindler, and others of his kidney; and M.,

who, I believe, was at Eton with me, and who has since spent some years in a lunatic asylum, till released by his relatives to proceed as a trooper to South Africa, whence he will return much saner than he arrived there, after providing his comrades infinite diversion. Poor M.! on one occasion it is reported that, after an engagement, he rode into the Boer lines under the impression that he was going home, spent the night there, and left the next morning for his own camp, attended by an escort of Boers rejoicing at their speedy deliverance from an unearthly creature.

Then there was Sergeant J., wounded in the thigh by a Martini bullet at Poplar Grove, whose language was so foul that he was at length ejected from the sergeants' mess, and who left the corps three weeks after he was wounded to fight a prize-fight at Port Elizabeth. I must confess that I regret not having heard a sample of Sergeant J.'s expletives. The sergeants of Rimington's were not, as a class, mealy-mouthed; and language too figurative for them must have been gorgeously purple.

Then there was Corporal F., the Quartermaster's clerk, schoolmaster by profession, and a model of business-like precision, who one day astonished the world by taking on the bully of the corps and knocking him out in two minutes. 'Yes, sir,' the corporal was never tired of complacently remarking to an interested listener; 'I could wear my cap and gown if I liked.' He had matriculated for Cambridge. Though he never quitted his office-stool (or tinned-meat box on end) on ordinary occasions, Corporal F. was very much to the fore when the band began to play; but my solicitations never prevailed upon him to parade for action clad in his mortar-board and undergraduate toga.

Then there was Private W., of the same extraction as Corporal F., the one Sol, the other Leo, in the bosom of their respective families, whose Hebraism evolved a self-assertiveness with a strong family likeness to that of the Jew whose strong common-sense made him realise the victory of the pen over the sword, so that even on the battle-field he cared nothing for his soldierhood, and glanced back regretfully at his long-lost cap and gown, the emblems of the intellect that rules the world. On one famous occasion W. had a tiff with an officer, a captain in virtue of his office. The affair culminated in W. haughtily exclaiming: 'At all events, I wore my two stars long before you did.' (Captains wear two stars on their shoulder-straps, indicating thus their rank.) Of course, poor little W. was heavily mulcted in damages for his impertinence, but those who had a high standard of what the British captain should be could not help admiring the suggestive humour of the little Jewish, hook-beaked Private Sol W., who had probably never risen nearer a captain than when he slept outside his tent on active service.

Sol was a great songster, and his mellow baritone led all the sing-songs round the bivouac fires. Charles was fond of sending for W. of an evening after dinner, and, while we all squatted in a circle round the blazing fire, Sol would stand trolling forth his native German love-songs in a voice all of a tremolo with sentiment. Thereafter he would be regaled with whisky and returned to his friends, with much the same emotions, I suppose, as a *prima donna* who has sung before Her Majesty and stayed to supper returns to her house in town. I cannot help remembering that it was Sol, too, who, when I had to leave the corps, presented me, on behalf of my troop, as

a parting gift, with the silver monogram R.G., which had fastened up the left side of his hat as long as I knew him. 'If we had been in a place where we could have got anything better, sir, we should have done it; as it is, we hope you'll take it as a small mark of our esteem.' Take it! I shall keep that little badge as long as I live amongst my best-prized possessions: for it is the token of the friendship of men whose friendship it is an honour to hold—brave soldiers, staunch allies, patriots voluntarily fighting for their Queen and their race.

Then there was Pat Nolan, last of the O'Gormans, and his fellow-countryman, De Landre—Irishmen, the most jovial and witty of their race. Pat was a diminutive man, a jockey by profession, who invariably enlisted wherever there was fighting to the fore. He had served in the Matabili war, and told us gruesome tales of white women awfully done to death, and as awfully avenged; he was a Jameson raider, and told us how young girls threw dung in his face as his captors, laughing, marched him into Pretoria, digging him savagely in the back with their rifles to keep his short legs up to the pace of their long ones. His stories and jokes were endless. Many of them revealed in a very convincing way the extraordinary pitch to which immorality and incest attain amongst the Boers. I remember one which amused us all very much. A young and sprightly Boer, very proud of his horsemanship, was courting a girl at a distance, to whose father's farm he was in the habit of riding on a prancing and caracoling steed. At one particular point, not far from the farm, where there was a dip in the land, he was wont to touch his horse with the spur, and appear suddenly over the ridge in all the pomp or masterful equitation, to the great delight and edification of his

ladye-love, watching through the window. On one ill-fated day, when the rains had converted the lowlands into swamps, he donned a new suit, saddled the park hack, and set out to see his mistress. But when he came to the dip below the ridge there was a deep sea of water everywhere; the drift in the spruit was obliterated; the horse could not see the holes; if he fell down, the new suit would be ruined. So our friend thinks out a mighty plan; jumps off his horse, takes off his breeches, ties them on the saddle, and wades with his horse through the flood. Soon they are across without mishap; they are under the ridge; the horse remembers his office; he gives a playful buck; the reins fly from the Boer's hand; the horse gallops serenely forward, with the breeches flying in the breeze, towards the accustomed gate; the fond damsel hastens to the window just as her lover, cursing, emerges over the ridge. Right-minded people will be delighted to hear that the match was not broken off in consequence. Another story he told me confirmed my previous impression of the marvellous wittiness of the Dublin jarvey. Pat one day, in a great hurry, took a car a few hundred yards and, when paying his fare, found he had no change but the exact legal amount, viz. 6d. He handed it to the jarvey, with apologies. 'I'd have given you that, sorr,' said the injured recipient, 'to have left me where you found me.' One of my mental photographs is Pat playing cricket at the farm near Bloemfontein, and fielding a ball in an aloe hedge—a diminutive roundabout grappling desperately with huge spiked leaves. 'Begorra,' he cried, 'it's like wadin' through bayonets!'

Then there was N., a classic, who had taken two gold medals at Dublin University, and was earning thousands as a 'coach' when his health broke down, and he had to

emigrate to South America. There he was, a plain trooper in Rimington's, one of the 'Broncho Bill brigade,' who volunteered, Argentines and all, and came out to the war, under the gallant Sancho Panza's command. Men of the type I have described abounded in the regiment; it was a liberal education to be in Rimington's. Some of the richer among the troopers, young bloods of the horse-racing fraternity from Johannesburg, used to give themselves airs on the strength of their smart clothes and inferential gentility, and shirked early morning parades and fatigues on every opportunity. The other troopers, humbler yet better men, dubbed these swells the 'leather-putty brigade,' because the Stohwasser gaiters shone gloriously on all their legs, as opposed to the blue putty served out to baser men by a paternal government. I was never weary, when orderly officer, of catching these skrimshankers sleeping calmly in their tents while the rest of us shivered on the kopje-tops in the chill dawn and thereafter shovelled up horse-dung for an hour before breakfast.

Naturally the fact that nearly all the troopers lived in the colony produced eternally recurrent applications for leave whenever the army halted for a space. It was extraordinary how many men had sick and dying parents, but these persons must have had wonderful constitutions, for they always seemed to pull through. At last Rimington, with his usual wit, said that he was thinking of issuing an order to this effect: 'Owing to the prevalence of an epidemic in the Colony, which appears especially rife amongst relations of men in this corps, no further leave will be granted.'

Discipline in externals in Rimington's was purposely relaxed, but in essentials it was rigidly exacted. The

average colonial differs vastly from the average Tommy Atkins, and Rimington and Charles warned us subordinates that we need not trouble to report a man for not saluting or 'sirring' one on every possible occasion. Tommy Atkins would sooner die than not salute an officer; the colonial doesn't salute his own friends, and therefore he occasionally forgets to salute his officer. But in essentials, such as the condition in which men kept their horses' backs, Rimington was a martinet. Woe to the trooper whose saddle didn't fit, or whose horse had been galled by the unequal distribution of weight. The dark face flushed, the eyes gleamed, and the delinquent soon began to wish himself under the earth. But the result was excellent, for the Major was known to be one of the best, if not the best, of the authorities on horses in the army, and the knowledge assisted the execution of the order. There is not the smallest doubt that, owing to his horse-mastership and care, Rimington's were always better mounted than any other regiment in the army.

The absence of needless and absurd restraints on the men's freedom was one of the most potent of the causes of the jealousy and resultant hate with which most regulars regarded the 'Tigers.'

Whenever and wherever a town was taken Rimington's men would be in it before the rest (Dick Master and some of ours were the first into Bloemfontein), and so long as the corps remained near you would see almost as many of ours in the streets as of half the other regiments engaged put together. If ever there was legitimate loot—oat-straw or mealies for horses—to be had at a derelict farm, Rimington would go out of his way or gallop on out of his place to get there before other people. 'First come, first served.' The net result was that our men and horses

alike grew fat where other people often went half-starved. This most desirable consummation was further materially advanced by the intimate knowledge of our colonists both of the country and Boer methods.

Some one or other of them knew the name of nearly every farm and its owner in the Free State ; some of them had been on good terms with the Boer farmers in olden days. These men took us short cuts, found old friends, obtained useful information, guided us to water, while less favoured corps were painfully toiling through a desert of emptiness and drought.

So much jealousy was excited by this legitimate exercise of the colonials' inherent advantages, added to the latitude Rimington so wisely allowed them in standing camps, that Rimington's became a sort of recognised vent for the spleen of all the ill-conditioned malcontents in the army. If a farm had been looted, if women's rings had been stolen off their fingers, if a remount officer's best horses had been driven off, with one accord the detractors shouted, ' Rimington's again.' I had the privilege of intimately knowing Mr. Thomas Smith, whom Lord Roberts appointed Assessor of damages done to Boer property, and he informed me that though my corps was popularly held responsible for nine-tenths of the spoliation into which it was his business to inquire, he had never in a single instance found a true bill against a man of Rimington's. People in this country would be astonished if I gave the name of the regiment which really deserved the distinction of possessing the most brigands. It was not a colonial corps nor yet a volunteer corps. But the most despicable of the false charges brought against Rimington's was that of having traitors in its ranks. This flagrant injustice was perpetrated at Modder River, after Magersfontein, when, I

suppose, the discomfited infantry, wanting to turn and rend somebody or something, fixed on Rimington's as a convenient scapegoat. 'They were Guides; why had they guided the column on to the heads of the Boers unless they were in the pay of the Boers?' As everybody knows now, the guiding at Magersfontein was done by a Staff officer who had previously reconnoitred the ground; there was no 'guiding' in the ordinary sense to be done.

Magersfontein was in full view from Modder River, and any sapper could have accurately estimated both its direction and distance from the tent he slept in for two nights before that fatal march. It is sufficient to say that this detestable libel even got into the English papers, and that both Lord Roberts and Lord Methuen published absolute denials of its truth, and that the editor of an English paper handsomely recanted his error in giving such a falsehood publicity.

It may be that a fertile source of jealousy is to be discovered in the facts that Rimington's have seen more service—*i.e.* have been in more engagements—than any other regiment on the western theatre of war, and that their casualty list amounts to nearly 40 per cent.

Our comparative immunity from the harassing shackles of red-tape discipline benefited us in many curious and indirect ways. In the regular regiments it is a heinous offence to loose off a rifle for any purpose other than that of slaying an enemy on the field of battle. I remember a subaltern telling me of the prodigious difficulty he had to get leave to shoot a lot of shell-maimed Boer horses after the battle of Driefontein. When everybody was half-starving at Paardeberg on about two biscuits a day, a gaunt sheep came loping by one fine morning as we sat at a most inadequate breakfast. Several hungry troopers

made dashes at the sheep's legs, and fell prone without result. Not so Charles. Shouting to his servant for his pony, he seized a carbine from a trooper and cantered off with his wounded ankle pendent almost to the ground. I rushed behind on foot to watch the chase, and after a long run I got up in time to see Charles sitting on the ground in front of his pony, drawing a deadly bead on the sheep. So that day we had mutton galore, all through contemning War Office regulations.

In standing camps the men's chief amusements were cricket, buck-shooting, and going into the local town (if there was one); but as the corps never was more than 180 strong, and as at least 80 of these were attached as guides to the various brigades composing the fighting line, when patrols had been sent out and deductions made for sickness, orderlies &c., there were rarely more than 30 men in camp at any one time. These spent most of their available leisure in eating and sleeping, as well they might, considering the hardships which had to be undergone on the march. 'Roll up for skoff,' was a frequent cry, and the cook was a great man, lord over half a dozen Kaffirs, who brought in wood from afar and crouched over the warmth as they watched the pots.

The arrival of a mail, of course, created great excitement. The officer who distributed the letters was the centre of a hand-thrusting throng. 'Brown?' 'Here, sir.' 'Jones?' 'Here, sir.' 'Robinson?' Dead silence; Robinson had been killed a fortnight before.

I remember a parcel arriving for a poor fellow called Cobham, who had died. Charles thought the best thing to do was to put the contents up to auction and send the money back to Cobham's mother, the sender of the packet. Accordingly he put the goods up to auction before a crowd

of troopers. There were two pairs of socks, a tablet of Pears' soap, and three packets of Maggi soup. The socks fetched a guinea a pair, the soap ten shillings, and the Maggi seven and sixpence a packet. That was at Makouw's Drift, before the days of the luxury of Bloemfontein, on the way from Paardeberg to Poplar Grove. Poor mother! It was indeed a heartbreaking profit on investment that she realised.

Our routine when we halted, whether for a long or a short period, was invariable. The Major was the first man to wake—his sleeplessness was proverbial—and then a long blast of his whistle woke every man in camp. By 4.30 the whole corps had fallen in on parade in the dark, and at once moved out to reconnoitre the Boer positions or reinforce our own in the vicinity, as the case might be. Sometimes this duty meant the scouring of a big plain to discover possible lurking Boers; sometimes it meant only the concentration of our force behind an adjacent kopje or two to repel a possible Boer attack at dawn. Thus we rode or lay about in the dark and the cold till the glorious sun rose and dissipated our doubts as to the proximity of Boers, and then home to fatigues and breakfast. This particular 'fatigue' was the cleaning of camp, necessitated by the presence of a hundred or more horses. It was a duty under the supervision of the orderly officer for the day, and none of us felt the same absorbing interest in the composition and ultimate destination of manure as Dean Hole displays in his most excellent 'Book about Roses.' The most disappointing part of it all was its want of finality; one shovelled and raked, and raked and shovelled, and still there was work for the industrious. Some of the troopers openly avowed their inability to understand the advantage of picking up

muck in one place and dumping it down in another fifty yards away. I believe one audacious subaltern, when reproved for neglect of this particular duty, replied that 'camp was quite clean when he went in to breakfast.' The 'leather-putty brigade' were far above such menial and degrading labour, and, unless strictly watched, after ostentatiously flourishing a shovel in the officer's face, they would execute strategic movements to their tents. Before breakfast, too, horses were watered at the nearest dam or river. One of the commonest sights to be seen in the theatre of war was the long sinuous string of horses going to and from water. In his shirt-sleeves a trooper rode a bare-backed horse and led another, and slowly the string merged in a trampling, splashing, shouting crowd, jostling in the red water, and slowly lengthened out again on the journey back to camp. After breakfast the C.O., the adjutant, and the orderly officer held 'Orderly Room,' which was sometimes the spacious veldt, sometimes a tent, and sometimes a room in a farmhouse. The chief offence was overstaying leave in the town or to the colony, and drunkenness was extremely rare. No man in my troop was ever, to my knowledge, the worse for liquor. The usual punishments were fines and confinement to camp for so many days, and degradation in the case of non-commissioned officers for the graver sort of offences. All applications for leave to quit camp went to the orderly officer, so that his attendance in camp on the days of duty was no sinecure. Charles, who was both adjutant and quartermaster during the greater part of the campaign, worked incessantly from morning to night. The whole internal organisation of the regiment fell entirely on his shoulders; he made all arrangements for feeding, clothing, and horsing the men, and feeding the horses, and carried

through, himself, the great mass of correspondence which, under the head of Returns and Reports, seems unnecessarily exacted from the regimental officer on active service. I once went to the ordnance store at Bloemfontein to buy a pair of boots for my Kaffir servant. After spending an hour and a half going from one authority to another, signing countless papers, and receiving countless permits, I managed to escape with a pair of ammunition boots, value four and sixpence, for which I paid. The same cumbrous machinery prevails in a regiment on active service, and it has two bad effects ; it wastes much valuable time, and it diverts from more profitable matters the attention of one of the best officers in the regiment.

No doubt the object of the framers of the system was most laudable—the preventing of any squandering of public money. But the system often defeats its own ends, because frequently men and horses lose condition for want of the necessaries which exist in abundance a few miles away, but which cannot be diverted to their obvious destination without the unravelling of miles of red tape. And men and horses are much more costly to the British public than oats and beef. The orderly officer next had to inspect the picquet, consisting usually of a non-commissioned officer and five men, whose duty was to relieve the picquet who had been out all night on some adjacent point of vantage. About half-past four in the afternoon he had to inspect and despatch a second picquet to relieve the first, doubly strong for night duty, and carrying great-coats and fodder for their horses in addition to their carbines and ammunition. The orderly officer had also to inspect the picquets once during the day and once during the night. The latter business was not a pleasing one. Apart from the disinclination one felt to turn out about

9 P.M. after working from 4 A.M., if the sky was clouded, as it often was, one's horse blundered into holes and dongas or walked into barbed wire in the pitchy blackness, and under these conditions it is extraordinary how easily one loses one's way. In addition to all this, the orderly officer was generally responsible for the well-being of the camp. If a horse died he had to take its letter and number, and see to its removal (by means of oxen or mules and chains) to a safe distance. Occasionally a strange horse would die in our precincts. Then would follow a note from the adjutant of the regiment asking if a horse marked so and so had come into our possession. On several occasions I have had to visit the gruesome remains of long-since-dead horses and take down in my note-book the regimental mark and number branded on the horse's hoofs. This necessitates a proximity which even one's own horse resents to the point of snorting and trying to break away. Those who have not tried it will not easily appreciate the difficulty of holding a dead horse's hoof, a note-book, a restive horse, and one's nose all at the same time.

The busiest men in camp were the farriers. They carried about with them their own anvil, bellows, tools and shoes, and there was always work for them to do. Each horse was compulsorily branded R.G. on one fore hoof, and its squadron letter and number on the other, and the farriers also invented a patent metal brand of R.G. which was, if the owner so desired, clapped red-hot on the near quarter and held there fizzling till the horse kicked or bolted. Most men preferred to borrow a pair of scissors from jovial Corporal Townshend of the Ambulance Corps, and clip the magic letters out of the hair on the rump. This device was invaluable. The amount of

horse-stealing that went on between different corps would have sufficed to hang half the mounted troops engaged in the good old days, and the disconsolate owner, wandering through alien lines in pursuit of his vanished steed, easily recognised the R.G., or a fake where the R.G. had recently been. As evidence of the lengths to which horse-stealing went, the correspondent attached to us had both his ponies stolen in one afternoon, and had to trudge from regiment to regiment seeking the lost. Eventually he was fortunate enough to get them both back. I once caught a Queenslander, in the grey dawn, in the act of stealing a horse from a circle of twenty, surrounded on all sides by troopers preparing to march. 'Jumping' was the technical expression for stealing, and 'horse-jumping' was in South Africa, as in England, a highly popular and lucrative sport. But whereas in England a gallery is almost an essential, in Africa it was considered greatly to impair the success of the proceedings.

The success of Rimington's as a corps may be ascribed to factors some of which are common to all irregulars and others particular to the body in question. Of the latter none was more efficacious than the supremacy of the voluntary spirit. Troopers engaged for no definite term, and if they disliked it they applied for and nearly always got their discharge. On the other hand, Rimington could get rid of any officer or man without showing cause. Consequently you never heard a grumble. All the men liked the work. In the next place Rimington was adored by his men, who would follow him anywhere because they were assured both of his dash and his cunning. They knew that he had spent more time in South Africa and amongst the Boers than probably any other officer in the British Army, and they very soon found out for themselves that he was as 'slim' as

De Wet as well as brave as a lion. Men will not follow on big ventures a leader who is perpetually losing odd lives here and there with nothing to show for them. Rimington was not one of those who 'round up' Boers with revolvers. Consequently, when it came to a pinch there was no lagging back.

The Boer war has proved one fact beyond all doubt: not that irregular troops are superior to regular, but that under our present system of training regular troops are made inferior to irregulars. Take as an illustration, the much-debated question of the behaviour of two crack cavalry regiments at Sanna's Post. I think no one who knows the British officer and Tommy would be so foolish as to bring wholesale charges of funk and panic against those two regiments; but that is beside the point. It is also beside the point to discuss whether the officers of the cavalry failed to appreciate the possibilities of defence, or whether they did so and were foiled by a sudden panic amongst their men.

The question is whether they proved as effective in battle, on the outbreak of that cataclysm of lead, as the irregulars with whom they were supposed to be co-operating? The answer of all who were there and saw must be in the negative. The honours of the day rested with the gunners, Alderson, Pilcher, and Rimington. If you compare the C.I.V. with the regulars of the Line, you will at any rate not be able to point to a single instance in which the conduct of that corps compared unfavourably with that of the best infantry of our army. The obvious and necessary induction is that irregular troops at present possess certain inherent advantages. First and foremost of these is a standard of intelligence far above that of the average regular; secondly, the soul-destroying barrack-

yard drill system has not taught them to think of nothing but the next word of command ; they use their eyes and reasoning powers ; in a word, their collective individuality proves itself a match for the massed collectivity of the regulars. It is possible, nay easy, to imagine a system of military education whereby, when the best material has been obtained by adequate pay, the present natural advantages enjoyed by the irregulars shall be incredibly enhanced and developed by training in the persons of the regulars. But until such a rational system is introduced the taxpayers will complain, and complain with justice, that they contribute vast sums for the maintenance of permanently embodied troops who, when tested in the crucible of war, are in few cases of more value, and in many cases are of less value, than hastily enrolled levies of civilians.

A BUCK-HUNT

It is a glorious thing to canter across the silent veldt, far from the hum of the awakened camps, as the rising sun reddens the eastern hills, and watch the scattered antelope through a strong glass from afar. Get on again and walk your horse slowly towards the herd, until uneasy movements show that they suspect your intentions to include more than a constitutional before breakfast. You can nearly always get within four hundred yards, sometimes nearer. You have picked out your buck (or ram, as the colonials call him), and there is no time to be lost in slipping quickly from the saddle, and pulling the reins over your horse's head. Then sit down with your reins over your right arm and draw a bead on him, and trust to Providence that your horse doesn't pull back at the critical moment. Some horses will stand by quietly to a shot if the reins are thrown over their heads on to the ground ; but I never owned one of these. Directly you let go of them they went home to breakfast. The report sends the herd into a bunch ; the does and fawns trot away quickly from the invader ; the young bucks follow, as in duty bound ; only a few old campaigners make light of the disturbance, amongst them the gentleman selected on account of the size of his moustaches, and remain gazing contemptuously at the profaner of their solitudes. The magazine is full ; the first shot must have been too high—in South Africa a hundred yards looks like ten, and the

novice who knows this generally falls into the opposite error of sighting for 400 yards when the real distance is 350 ; aim an inch or two lower and pull !

This time the lords of the herd smell danger ; they cluster together and trot slowly away, including the big buck you fired at. But he is hit ! He limps, he lags behind the rest ; one of his forelegs is broken. Over Careless's head go the reins, up into the saddle as fast as may be ; jam the carbine into the bucket as you spur him into his best gallop ; away, away over the dewy grass, and never mind the ant-bear holes. The buck gains at every stride—he is leaving you standing still ; but what is that cloud of dust on his track far down by yonder rocks ? Away again, away ! He has gone down, head over heels, like an acrobat in the ring, and up again as fast ; but his pace is slackening now ; the long thudding gallop of the horse is gaining on him ; now he trots, now stands still, with hanging leg and heaving flanks, his black lyrate trophies outlined against the saffron morning sky. Make a circuit to deceive him as to your intentions, and get him broadside on ; then quickly dismount and put a merciful bullet through his heart. There he lies—your first spring-buck—a harmony of white and fawn and russet ; as lithe as a greyhound, as neat as a picture, as pretty as paint.

Now out with your knife and sever the tendon from the bone between the knee and fetlock in the forelegs, and the hock and fetlock in the hindlegs ; hoist the buck on to the cantle of your saddle, and implore your horse to stand steady for one moment. If he's thoroughly blown after a long gallop he'll probably acquiesce, but I've often had my buck bucked off half a dozen times before I could secure him, and lifting an animal weighing 70 lbs. on to a horse's back half a dozen times is no joke.

While your quarry is poised unsteadily on the horse's back, undo the girths on one side, and slip them through the orifices cut between the tendon and the bone of both legs, buckle up your girths again, and repeat the operation on the other side of your horse. It is hardly necessary to point out that the buck must be laid on the horse's back so that his legs point naturally towards the horse's head. If your girths are tight enough, and you have balanced the animal nicely to start with, a buck secured in this way cannot move, and your horse hardly feels the extra weight. One day, riding the pony I looted at Paardeberg, I was so fortunate, some fifteen miles from home, as to kill two buck with one bullet. It was a pity to waste the meat, which was always useful as biltong if not fresh, so I galloped both the buck, and fastened them one on top of the other in the way I have described. Dutchman came home at his usual loping canter nearly all the way, although he must have been carrying at least twenty stone. The practice of carrying disembowelled antelope on the cantle of your saddle is not one that I would recommend to persons who are fastidious in regard to their personal appearance. It has a decided tendency to cover the tunic and breeches with blood, and to give the mildest-mannered man a somewhat murderous expression.

And now you can get on Careless yourself, and canter slowly home to breakfast, revelling in the exquisite emotions of successful sport. The korán will rise scolding from their heathery beds; the great grey lumbering vultures (*aasvogel*) will watch you stolidly from their white-ribbed carcase; the hares will scamper away from between your horse's legs. The rock-roses, palest of yellow-petalled beauties, will open their violet hearts to you; the pink sorrel and the clumpy white heather will shake the

dewdrops from their eyes as you go by. For it is the hour that follows dawn—the best hour in all the twenty-four—when man, and beast, and flower are freshest, and the glorious sun is chasing away the gloom and coldness of the night.

If there is plenty of meat in camp the buck will be cut up into thin strips, which are hung on a string between two posts, in the full glare of the sun. Every evening before sundown the meat is taken under cover, and next morning when the sun is hot the process is repeated. This precious biltong, in the making, reminds one of the dangling stoats and weasels under the keeper's tree; and there is really nothing to choose between the two smells. When it is dried the biltong is fit to eat (so say its votaries); for it is eaten uncooked. I never had the desire to taste it, but those who know are loud in its praises; and it is undoubtedly valuable food for mounted troops who want to travel light.

Men who, like Mr. Edwards of Glenlyon, knew the Free State thirty years ago, assured me that in those days the veldt was black with moving herds of various antelope. Now you may travel a dozen miles without seeing a trace of big game, and then the springbuck is practically the only antelope left in the country.

The only other species I saw were the tiny stembok, the rooi rhébok, and a herd of black wildebeest near Kopje Alleine—a noted preserve of game. The springbuck exists because of his comparative capacity for domestication. He haunts a particular locality—sheltered, perhaps, by a big kopje from the prevailing storms, abounding in grass and water, and removed from roads and railway. The favoured farmer, very likely, draws a cordon of barbed wire round the herd's usual pasturage.

When the market is favourable the farmer shoots a young buck or two, but otherwise the herd is undisturbed. So in the course of time the springbuck become accustomed to the presence of man, and the farmer comes to the belief that the buck are as much his property as the sheep and goats that browse about his doors. The English occupation dissipated this error. British troops took and slew the springbuck, and Boers brought in claims for compensation. English law held that the springbuck were *feræ naturæ*—the property of him who takes and slays, and that whereas the troops were operating in a conquered country the law of trespass had no application. So Tommy continued to shoot when he got the chance; and a fat springbuck is worth anything from 25*s.* to 2*l.* in the market.

I cared not at all for biltong, but there was one product of the springbuck which especially commended itself to me. This was the milk of the ewes, which I never failed to draw off after their demise, and drink with the double gusto of a thirsty hunter and one who had not seen fresh milk for many a day. Once I casually mentioned my habit in this respect to an old sergeant-major who had spent the best part of his life in South Africa. 'Indeed, sir! Well, I believe a dead ewe's milk's nothing but poison; and I wouldn't touch a drop of it for a thousand pound.' However, the milk was so rich and creamy and luscious withal that even this solemn warning failed to deter me, and as I never had a day's sickness in the country, I think my worthy friend the sergeant-major was mistaken.

The colonial method of stalking buck differs widely from that natural to most Englishmen. The colonial, on getting to within eight hundred to six hundred yards of

the game, sits down and salivates them till his five-and-thirtieth bullet goes home. This entails a waste of ammunition, and frequently results in the maiming of several wretched beasts. The Englishman, by dint of slow and patient stalking, can get within three hundred yards, and then it is fairly easy to make certain of a buck. But very often the preliminary stalking process will mean an hour's work: the buck grow alarmed and trot away from the persistent hunter; then they stand to gaze, then trot away again; but gradually the hunter edges closer and closer, and by walking in a circle round the herd he seems to destroy the keenness of their perception of danger. I found that one of the easiest ways of stalking buck was to get between a herd and the setting sun. The fierceness of the light blunted the acuteness of the antelopes' sight; they lost their minute sense of distance, and the hunter crept upon them almost unawares.

My rambles in search of buck led me often many miles from camp, and the Intelligence officer was never weary of assuring me that some day I should be taken prisoner or shot by lurking Boers. Fortunately he was wrong; but on two occasions I came rather near it. The first of these was when I had wounded a buck and given chase. I was riding Dutchman, who could stay all day and all night, and I went on securely, feeling certain of my ability to ride the buck to a standstill. Frequently I got within half a dozen yards of him, and once I made an unsuccessful effort to club him with my carbine. If I had stopped and taken a sitting shot I should have got him. But as it was, the buck got better as he went on—as the Sandhurst cadet has it, *Vires acquirit eundo*—and I galloped on angrily into an ugly country, where bush and trees clothed the flanks of rocky kopjes. The buck made for an easy

slope which led to the top of one of these fastnesses ; and there he disappeared. I hunted the ground as carefully as the scrub would let me, but I never saw him again. Instead, I saw a sight which gave me a 'regular turn,' as the villagers say. There was a waggon in the dell between the slopes, and near it a sort of hut, compounded of bricks and wood. Bottles, tins, and all sorts of *débris* lay about ; beyond a doubt it had been a Boer encampment a few days before ; perchance it was at that very moment, for I knew that the main Boer laager could not be more than five miles further on. You may be certain that I wasted no more time looking for the buck ; I got Dutchman quickly down the reverse slope, and pricked homewards with a thankful heart.

The other occasion was when, after a long, dreary, blank day without sight of game, I came on a couple of buck the far side of a wire fence, not many hundred yards from a farm. Beyond the buck again a wire fence ran nearly parallel to the one in front of me, and in the dim distance, near the farm, a transverse wire enclosed a much narrower area than in my immediate front. So I cut the fence with my clippers, and drove the buck carefully down the *cul-de-sac*. When they found their advance barred I reckoned on getting an easy shot. But I reckoned without my involuntary host. I had not gone very far before I found that I was being stalked as well as the buck. A shot came from the farm, and a bullet whistled over my head. I remembered the Intelligence officer's prediction, and made for the wire with all possible speed. I cut it again with malignant pleasure, and hoped all the cattle enclosed therein would stray into the hands of the British. I got away untouched, but I never went twenty miles from our outposts

alone again. The extraordinary feature of my buck-shooting experience was the frequency with which the bullets struck the animals' legs. A buck's legs are not much thicker than three quill pens tied together, and it always seemed to me curious that low bullets should happen to hit such tiny marks, especially as the line of the legs is not usually the part of the body one aims at. I remarked this fact to a colonial brother-officer, and he told me that he had noticed the same thing.

One day I had a long shot at a buck standing near a stone. I missed the buck, but the stone got up and hobbled painfully away. The stone was a sheep, and I had hit it! Another day I started out for a day's hunting with twenty-two cartridges in my bandolier. Between bad luck and bad shooting I managed to loose off twenty cartridges without anything to show for them. The sun was getting low, and I was twelve miles from camp. I determined to give it up as a bad job and go home. On my way I came across a small herd, and thought I might as well get rid of my two remaining cartridges. With my last bullet but one I wounded a fat doe, and after a nice gallop I rode her to a standstill, and finished her off with my last. Fortune is a fickle goddess.

There was another method of buck-hunting which was almost as safe for the buck as it was perilous for the hunters. But it was the supreme delight of the men of my troop, and coming home from a patrol I have often taken part in it. Someone would descry a herd of antelope, and a general petition would be made for a hunt. The fifteen or twenty men would then divide into three parts. One part would work round on to the distant flank of the herd; another would get behind them, facing in the direction they wanted to drive them; the third would range up on

the near flank. There was no particular order observed after the buck took alarm and sheered off. Some galloped in as hard as they could lay legs to the ground to get a better shot. Some lay down and emptied their bandoliers where they lay ; others rode to cut off the now flying antelope. It was just as exciting as, and rather more dangerous than, a pitched battle. The two flanking parties fired into one another ; the attacking party in the rear jeopardised the existence of those of the flankers who had galloped after the herd. I never remember seeing a buck rolled over dead in one of these skirmishes, but I have seen some of the best runs after wounded buck I ever had the luck to take part in. One day McCarthy of my troop and I got away after a buck which gave us a two hours' gallop and then escaped because our horses were dead beat. But eventually I refused to allow these troop-hunts, because one of the men casually remarked after a grand morning's sport that a bullet had struck up the sand under his horse's nose. I realised how awful would be the Major's eye if I returned minus a horse, or, still worse, minus a man. I notice that 'accidentally killed' is a fairly frequent notice in the casualty lists. This looks as if other corps had discovered the delights of hunting buck in troops. I only hunted the rooi rhébok once, and then by the favour of my friend Mr. Edwards of Glenlyon, about twelve miles north of Bloemfontein. These animals are now somewhat rare, and Mr. Edwards is one of the few landowners in the Free State who have made any attempt to preserve them. Their home is amid the thorny thickets on the steepest hillsides, and they never leave the kopje for the plain. On the flat they can easily be ridden down ; but their power of negotiating steep and rocky slopes is hardly inferior to that of the chamois.

One day in March I started to ride Careless the fifteen miles that lay between our camp and Glenlyon. I had got half-way, and was slowly cantering along, when he suddenly fell down, and rolled over my leg. I got on, and was walking slowly when he fell again, this time taking the skin off both his knees. I walked him four miles, till I struck a Kaffir hut, left him there, borrowed a pony, and went on. Edwards's house nestles beneath the kopje where the rhébok live. It is a ridge about three hundred feet above the level of the plain, rising sheer with densely wooded flanks, and widening in parts of the summit into grassy plateaux. Mr. Scott, a friend of Edwards, who lives and works with him, very kindly volunteered to act as my shikari. Scott is a fine type of the colonial—hard, plucky, and persevering. He is fifty-eight years old, but he went up that steep, rocky face like a wild goat, leaving me panting and foaming in his wake. Then we got into a wilderness of stone and scrub, where grey-green, lance-leaved taibosch contrasts with the warm red of the rocks. Scott, to my great annoyance, began throwing large stones down the hillside to elicit the buck. He informed me that they lay as close as partridges. After an hour's hunt we started the quarry. In a secluded grassy dell, amid the scrub and the rocks, far away from everywhere, up jumped about seven does. The females, unlike most antelope, carry no horns. I put up Edwards's little carbine and fired, but though the does were close they were almost hidden in the long grass. Off they went, and I missed a long shot. It was beautiful to see them clamber up an impossible-looking cliff in the distance, rattling down the stones behind them as they sprang from rock to rock. We walked and walked, over stones and through 'wait-a-bit' scrub, till the day began

to wane, and saw no more rhébok. Scott shot a partridge, a bird just like ours at home, but his flesh is whiter when cooked. Suddenly we saw a solitary buck ahead. We followed him up and lost him. Just as we were remarking that we were not fated to get a rhébok that day at any rate, Scott suddenly stopped speaking, and bent down. 'Now's your chance,' he whispered. A buck had got up from his lair in the grass, and stood outlined against the sky about two hundred yards away. I up with my carbine and let drive. 'Over him,' said Scott mournfully. However, a few yards more showed us the buck kicking on the ground. He got up again, but a raking shot put an end to his existence. He was a full-grown buck, with horns seven inches long. Kirby gives five inches as usual. That night I did not get back to camp till half-past eleven, having lost my way in the dark. The veldt thereabout abounds in cavernous, steep-sided watercourses, and the pony Edwards lent me to get home on was a driving-pony and unused to negotiating such obstacles. I spent a long time looking for drifts over a succession of these tiresome spruits, and at last struck the railway, which gave me the clue I wanted. That night I was wet, tired, and hungry; but the rhébok's headskin was in my saddle-bag.

FARMING

OF farming in the restricted sense—that of cultivating the land—South Africa knows little and the Boers nothing. The latter are a pastoral people, and rely almost entirely on their flocks and herds. Here and there some oats are raised ; a few quince trees, with golden fruit set in a foil of burnished foliage, occasionally shade a rudimentary kitchen-garden ; but for the most part the rich veldt grows its rich grasses for itself, and the owner is content. The anomalous conditions under which farming is prosecuted strike the newcomer.

Some of the best soil in the world lies untilled for want of the water necessary to the existence of the crop. In a country where every known form of bovine disease is rampant, cattle form the staple. In a country where water is abundant there is for ever a crying drought. In a country where crops are the most difficult to produce, there are the most insects to prey on them. Consequently it is not surprising that even the most laborious and persevering of colonists tell you with confident despondency that South African farming is not a paying game. The farmer naturally labours under all the disadvantages incidental to the occupation of a new country ; but with the organised application of capital and labour which we may expect under British administration there is not the smallest reason why the area from the Zambesi to the Cape and from Komati Poort to Mafeking should not become some

of the most valuable agricultural land in the world. Take the water question. There is abundance of water, and yet a crying drought. During the rainy season the rivers, of which South Africa boasts a comprehensive network, came down in terrific spate. In India every drop of that life-giving water would be tapped by great canals and sent over the whole face of the surrounding country. In South Africa it helps to swell the seas. There is not a single canal, and apparently the Governments are too poor to think of making any. And yet the Mogul Emperors, three or four hundred years ago, thought, and rightly thought, that no taxation, no forced labour, was too excessive to secure the livelihood of thousands of generations. We cannot vaunt our modern civilisation at the expense of the old so long as the foundations on which society rests—a population independent of commerce—are neglected in order to put scientific touches to its cloud-compelling pinnacles. It is a truism, but still one easily lost sight of, that we cannot all be distributors of wealth, and live as it is said of certain shipwrecked mariners on a desert island, who eked out a precarious existence by taking in one another's washing.

South Africa can never be prosperous until it is *αὐτάρκης*—self-sufficing; and it can never be self-sufficing until it maintains a large agricultural community dependent on storage-water for its crops, and dependent on crops for its wealth. There are other means of collecting the precious water beside canals; in the rainy season immense quantities of water might, with proper appliances, be caught and stored, which at present only drench the soil and then penetrate to depths as yet untapped by wells. These last should also be bored at stated intervals by Government, who should regard the water question in

South Africa as one of infinitely greater moment than railways and all other recognised State enterprises. Trains at present run through deserts; when the country grows green it will be time enough to build more railways to collect the harvest.

Nothing would have a more beneficial effect on the native races than a *corvée* which compelled millions to dig canals and reservoirs. Too often the Kaffir is a lazy, good-for-nothing oaf; compulsory labour would provide him with a competent wage and resultant comfort, which would stimulate him to future voluntary service. Besides, the moral effect of enormous operations carried out for the obvious benefit of all classes of the community, by a government and nation for whom at all times the Kaffir has not shown too marked a degree of respect, would greatly influence the future attitude of the black races in South Africa towards their masters.

There is another partial solution of the drought question which merits attention it has not hitherto received in a practical form. I remember an old resident in the Punjab assuring me that, whereas when he came to that part of India thirty years before there was no rainfall whatever, at the present time there is an annual and fairly copious rainy season. He ascribed the change entirely to the practice of planting trees. In the Orange River Colony I did not see a single tree, planted by the hand of man, that was not within fifty yards of a house, and intended for shade. There are no plantations, no avenues (except in towns); it is not until you cross into the Transvaal that nature herself provides anything more majestic than the stunted willows that fringe the river-banks. But eucalypti grow well in the most arid districts, and reach a great height. A paternal government

would do well to appoint an official charged with the duty of planting woods in those parts of the country where rivers are fewest, and water consequently is least accessible. The locusts are, of course, the standing curse of cultivation. I believe experiments have been made in the attempt to inoculate whole swarms with the germ of a fatal disease ; but the transmission of the germs must of necessity be slow, and by no means necessarily continuous or exhaustive. But the great point to be aimed at in South Africa is the establishment on the land of a class of small proprietors, and where the area to be guarded is not of great extent a man and his family are usually numerous enough to scare away the plague with fires and the clash of gongs.

It is an extraordinary fact, but a fact nevertheless, that the diseases which affect cattle and horses in a new country tend gradually to disappear as the country becomes settled and cultivated. Doubtless this is to be at any rate partially accounted for by the turning up of soil full of malarial germs to the influence of the sun ; for, contrary to common belief, the sun is a great destroyer of germs. And yet this solution seems very partial and eminently unsatisfactory. For instance, a soldier who had been amongst the first to garrison Mafeking told me that the first year they were there a very large proportion of their horses died of the sickness ; the next year a smaller proportion died, and so on ; until he ended by inferring that at the present time horse-sickness must have died out in that neighbourhood. The cultivation theory will hardly apply here, because around Mafeking there is little or none. Personally, I view with favour a theory that to many people will sound ridiculous. A very talented and witty Irishman, whom I met at his house in the beautiful Kulu Valley in the midst of the Himalayas, assured me that

human beings had the power of creating climates, or atmospheres, or whatsoever you choose to term the aerial envelope that surrounds a defined area; and that, given ordinarily sanitary conditions, this human atmosphere was invariably inimical to disease of all kinds, and reacted favourably on those who created it. For example, if, he said, some Esquimaux settled in a temperate district the climate would—to a certain limited extent, in a defined area occupied pretty thickly by the Esquimaux—become colder, approximating to the natural atmosphere of the Northerners; whereas if some Indians colonised the same parts their imported indigenous atmosphere would have the effect of warming the local climate. This latter theory seems a little to tax one's powers of credulity, but really the subject is so complex and so little understood that I for one would not like to say it was mere nonsense. That human beings do salubri- fy climates unhealthy previous to their occupation is, I believe, indisputable. But how they do it seems one of the unfathomed secrets of nature. It may be, simply, that the human exhalation has a noxious effect on germ life. The question of the influence of soils on health seems to me a very interesting one. Few people know how poisonous most soils are. In Leicestershire most hunting men carry with them a strong antiseptic, which they at once rub into a scratch, overreach, or any wound their horse may chance to receive, because it has been found by experience that if mud gets on to the sore place, inflammation, blood-poisoning, or lock-jaw sets in, and the horse dies. It will be remembered how the plague germ of India was generally first caught by those who had sores on their feet, and who went unshod. The general conclusion seems to be that most germs live on or in the ground, and that exposure to the sun and human

environment both tend to destroy them. This being so, every day that goes by helps to ameliorate the position of the South African farmer. There can be little doubt that all the scourges to which his beasts are subject—rinderpest, horse-sickness, *dikkop sikte*, eye-disease—are germ diseases which will give way before the steady advance of immigration and agriculture.

Nature is a wonderfully co-ordinated system of checks and balances; and where she takes with one hand she seems ever to give with the other. Nowadays the farmer, in a thinly populated country, breeds hundreds of cattle and sees half of them die of disease. The remainder he sells at a good price. In the future the farmer, in a thickly populated country, will breed thousands of cattle, and see few of them die of disease. The remainder he will sell at a figure which in these days would seem very cheap.

To-day there is no capital sunk in the land; it is the virgin veldt. The veldt gives both good and evil; the herds grow fat on the rich grasses, even though they die of rinderpest. The farmer has little outlay, and little competition. Soon he will have much outlay and much competition, and prices will fall. But simultaneously the capital sunk in improving the soil will increase production and diminish disease, and the increased harvest and the larger herds will balance both the outlay of capital and the fall in prices. Nature is an adept in the niceties of compensation. But even at the present time the world-old distinction between sagacity and ineptitude makes itself felt in South African farming. First, of course, in the choice of the farm, because some veldt is much richer than others. 'Sour' veldt is no good at all. Then in the choice of the cattle best suited to it. Next, in the determination of the proper produce to aim at, whether

butter, beef, or live stock. Next, in eliminating all factors likely to impair the attainment of the single object kept in view.

I had the good fortune to meet two men—neighbours—who were excellent illustrations of the truth that brains and perseverance will succeed anywhere and with anything. I met, besides, a great many other farmers who were typical exemplars of the converse of this truth. I need not bother to dilate on either their mistakes or their complaints. You can see and hear them every day in England. Mr. Roger Edwards has a beautiful farm at Glenlyon, close to Glen Station, twelve miles north of Bloemfontein. The land thereabout, as I think I have told you, rises into sudden crags and ridges, and mimosa bushes fringe the little valleys. There is water as well as shade and protection from the winds. Here lives a magnificent herd of cattle. They get no fodder at any time of year other than what they pick off the veldt, and yet they are all as fat as stall-fed show cattle in this country. They are red polled—a cross between a North Devon cow and a Norfolk polled bull. The dam gives them hardihood, the sire ensures their hornlessness, which is a great advantage when the cattle are massed in the kraals with their calves before milking. There were always sufficient cows in milk to provide from seventy to ninety pounds of butter a day, for which Edwards got 1s. 8d. a pound at his own door. The bulk of it went to Johannesburg. Edwards had a favourite saying that ‘horses, sheep, and women spoil a farm.’ Of course it depends on the farm. If you go in exclusively for cattle, horses and sheep help to spoil it. Women, in my opinion, must always be an addition to any farm. Sometimes, perhaps, they may spoliage the produce of the farm, but

that is not an agricultural problem. The true inwardness of Edwards's apophthegm consists in the fact that horses and sheep have two rows of teeth, whereas cattle only have one. I notice that even many country-bred people are ignorant of this somewhat elementary fact. Have you never noticed how a cow's tongue laps round the grass? That is because she has no upper teeth. Horses and sheep use their double set, and thereby are enabled to get hold of and eat much shorter grass than a cow can pluck off with her flexile tongue. The result is that the horses and sheep crop the veldt so close that the cows fare third best. If you want good milk and butter, and fat cows, you must not let the horses and sheep into the cow-pasture. As to the women, one is generally quite enough. She will probably fulfil the cropping functions of about a thousand horses and sheep. Old Roger Edwards was nothing if not consistent. He had no sheep at all; only one pair of driving horses—excellent grey geldings; and he had practised celibacy all his life.

The circumstances under which I first made his acquaintance were characteristic of the old man. He was using a pick at the bottom of a new well he was sinking—the third unsuccessful attempt he had made to tap water on his farm. Men of this type must eventually succeed in everything they undertake. Across the road, so to speak, in a little white house beneath the fringed and fronded rocks of the escarpment, lived Mr. Scaife and his little daughters—a sliding-scale of Kate Greenaway sun-bonnets and bare legs. Mr. Scaife holds the proud position of being champion pig-breeder of South Africa. He has taken 250*l.* in prizes in a week, and has exhibited even in distant Capetown, where his enterprise gained him a special award. Gold and silver medals are as plentiful in

his house as Japanese fans in other people's. And yet this man began business as a draper in Johannesburg. He soon discovered that there was too much competition in that line, and he determined to try dairying. So, having no capital, he began operations in butter-making by the laborious process of whipping up a tubful of milk with a stick, and when the butter refused to be made in such a rudimentary way he bought a separator on tick. Thenceforward he prospered, and in a little time began to specialise in Yorkshire pigs. His achievements in this direction are proven by the medals and prizes aforesaid, and by Mr. Smith's verdict that 'Lord Ellesmere himself would be proud to own Scaife's pigs.' If you want to own a pig yourself, buy a Yorkshireman. They are nearly as big as donkeys.

A waterside garden is one of the revelations of South Africa. All around you gleams the yellow veldt, parched and dusty; and yet here beneath your feet is an oasis, radiant with colour, fragrant with flowers, crowned with shade. The first of these gardens that I saw was at Rosebank, close to Modder River station; the second at Kenilworth, Mr. Rhodes's garden outside Kimberley; the third at Mr. De Jongh's farm, on the road to Reddersburg, ten miles from Bloemfontein. Irrigation channels, carried from the river in the first case, from the Wesselton mine in the second, and from a spruit in the third, are the simple secret of them all.

Among the trees grown I noticed beef-wood, eucalyptus, pinus insignis, olive, willow, aspen, fig, peach, pear, plum, nectarine, quince, apple, cherry, vine, and pomegranate. Of vegetables I saw spanspeks (or what we call hot-house melons), water-melons, tomatoes, peas, onions, beet, carrots, parsnips, potatoes, yams, salsify, leeks, Kaffir melons, thyme,

mint, marjoram, cabbage, lettuce, chillies. Strawberries there were, too, and prickly pears, and Cape gooseberries. Flowers hardly anywhere received the attention they deserve; roses, carnations, chrysanthemums, cannas, zinnias, and the deep blue convolvulus were the commonest.

There is already a considerable jam factory at Stellenbosch, and the quality of the jam is very fairly good. But there will be no real progress in farming until the Government cope with the fundamental water question. Till that time true cultivation, as opposed to turning out cattle on the veldt, will remain partial, meagre, and unsatisfactory. No doubt for many years to come the mining population will be able to obtain food-stuffs as cheaply from abroad as they could get them at home. But that is not the proper way of looking at the question. The object of the Government ought to be to attract a large immigrant population of small farmers or peasant proprietors, who should at once relieve the congestion of British urban districts, counter-balance the Dutch, and to some extent the Kaffirs, and in themselves provide a valuable military reserve in the event of hostilities. But such a class, in sufficient numbers, cannot be attracted until there is reasonable prospect of their obtaining an assured livelihood without the investment of considerable capital. At present there is no opening for such men, and unless the Government expend millions in making canals, channels, and reservoirs, there never will be. South Africa is one of the most valuable of our unrealised assets of Empire; the obvious duty of those responsible for the Empire is to ensure to the utmost its exploitation.

THE FAMILY PARTY

No silver shimmers amid orchids on our mess-table; no brilliant tunics dot our ante-room with colour; our cook would sadden the professional heart of a third-rate scullery-maid. Oftenest the welcome call to dinner brings us crowding round a fire roaring *sub Jove frigido*, with a box for one to sit on, and a dilapidated string-doctored camp-chair for another, and nothing but the veldt for a third. Sometimes the rain drives us beneath a tarpaulin slung between two ox-waggons, and if there is not room enough for everybody there, under the waggons themselves, sprawling much in the same positions that Captain Haldane and Lieutenant Le Mesurier assumed during their underground captivity in Pretoria; sometimes we sit decently and in order round the table of a farmhouse. But wherever we find ourselves we manage to be comfortable and merry. As Mr. Winston Churchill remarks in one of his books, 'a little plain food and the philosophic temperament are the only indispensable things in life.' And indeed it would astonish those who haven't tried it how easily and quickly even the most fastidious become reconciled to scanty food and nasty food, and frequent wettings, and sleeping on the ground, and going to bed in your boots, and drinking liquid mud, and going without a bath for a fortnight, and all the other amenities of campaigning. It would seem as though the philosophic temperament were not so much the product of reason as

of necessity. At any rate, circumstances develop a kind of bastard philosophy ; for when everything is about as primitive as it can be, the worst grumblers soon learn to accept the inevitable, and instead of regretting the necessity of sleeping in a puddle, they expatiate on the vileness of hotel accommodation in the next town. The grumbler's nature is to bother himself about things which might be better, and take as they come things which couldn't be worse.

Some fantastical and humorous spirits make it their business to reduce *ad absurdum* the critical function. Such a one is M., our only Irishman. He occasionally gazes at the glorious blue sky and sighs tragically. 'Ah, but this is a cursed climate! What wouldn't I give to see a real dirty sky, with the rain coming down as it comes down in Dublin!' And then his blue eye will wink across a large expanse of red face at you, in the most comical manner imaginable. M. is a great judge of the good things of this life, and his stalwart person can be weakened almost to the point of collapse by the enumeration of unobtainable delicacies.

'What do you think of these soles *à la maître d'hôtel*?' you ask him as you produce a rather odoriferous wad of tinned salmon. M. glares speechlessly. 'This *Veuve Chicquot* I can recommend,' you assure him as you fill his tin mug with alum-settled ditch-water. M. looks about for something to throw. 'Bill, don't overdo that wood-cock,' you tell the Basuto servant, as he brings in a black saucepan full of tough stewed mutton. 'O, *do* shut up!' groans M. feebly, his face contorted with unappeasable longings, and his speech indistinct by reason of the aqueous condition of his mouth. I believe there is only one thing in South Africa that M. really loves, and that

is his *rooiskimmel*, which, being interpreted, means strawberry roan. This pony of his does an extraordinary amount of work, and gets fat on the extra feeds M. takes good care to provide it with. When it isn't being ridden it pulls M. in a Cape-cart into the adjacent town by day, and out again by night; and it must possess as profound a knowledge of the language both of endearment and expletive as any British-owned quadruped.

We all of us feel a debt of gratitude to M. for his nationality, his brogue, his wit, the humorous eloquence of his detestation of things South African.

In this latter respect Charles out-herods Herod. When the everlasting topic of the war, and how long it is going to last, and why it hasn't finished sooner, and what general or staff-officer would be Stellenbosched if only he got his deserts, has been temporarily exhausted, one of the favourite full-dress debates turns on the relative advantages of regular and irregular troops, considered especially with reference to the colonials. A. and Charles are the protagonists. The former openly avows his preference for men trained on the irregular model; he holds that the British cavalry regiment is an obsolete fighting machine, and that our future system, instead of educating the irregular up to the regular, ought to aim at preserving in the regular the distinctive characteristics of the irregular. This opinion is worth mentioning, as the deliberate verdict of a man of great ability, who has seen both sides of the question—as an officer of the — Dragoons, and as a very successful organiser and leader of colonial irregulars. Charles, another cavalry officer, cannot disguise his disapproval of such heterodoxy; his commanding officer's views surprise him; if they came from the lips of a civilian they might, of course, be treated with

the utter contempt they deserve; but a commanding officer's heresies wring the adjutant's heart. With quiet conviction, and quite unmoved by the presence of two colonial officers, he records his belief that all colonials are liars and braggarts, and that, born and bred in such a God-forsaken country, it is a wonder they are not worse than they are. With that he lights a fresh pipe, and replies with stolid courtesy to the outraged colonials, who don't know whether to laugh or feel aggrieved. When Charles feels at all depressed, which is seldom, he cheers himself up by recalling his first experience of colonial shooting. Some troopers had been 'bucking' about their marksmanship, and how one constantly killed pows on the wing with bullets, and how another never missed a galloping stembuck, so Charles led them to an extempore range, and when most of them missed the target altogether at two hundred yards, he realised that life in South Africa had its compensations. He maintains, I believe with truth, that the average of British shooting is far higher than the average of Boer or colonial.

Charles is a most amusing person to listen to in an argument, because of the narrowness of his view, the common-sense materialism of his opinions, and the ponderous conviction with which he maintains them. The other day I heard him discussing the Arundel Society pictures which deck the walls of our farmhouse near Bloemfontein. P., who has received a commission from the ranks, is an art critic, and, I believe, a writer in the 'Saturday Review' when he's at home, so naturally he laid himself out to defend the Arundel Society's productions, and an eloquent art-lecture, full of terms like 'composition,' 'scheme of colour,' 'chiaroscuro,' 'idealism,' and 'brio,' fell on Charles's Philistine ears. He listened

quietly, and then, pointing to a picture, said : 'Is that animal meant to be a dog?' P. said it was meant to be a dog. 'D'you think it's at all like a dog?' P. confessed that it was not very much like a dog. 'If a man,' replied Charles, 'tries to paint a dog and paints a coal-scuttle instead, he must be a shocking bad artist, and a shocking bad artist can't possibly paint a good picture.' With which the discussion terminated, P. suggesting that they should 'ride out somewhere and take lunch'—an *al fresco* entertainment which seemed to him the height of enjoyment, and which he never wearied of proposing to such of his friends as were at leisure. Pure intellect is represented by 'Fanny,' as the troopers call him, an extremely unkempt little man with a womanish face, a short brown beard, a great contempt for bullets, and the reputation of being one of the best climbers in the world. I never had the privilege of knowing Fanny off the war-path, but I am told that in the piping times of peace his appearance is the despair of military precisians. You may imagine what he is like on active service. At once he lets his beard grow, discards a rather respectable pair of breeches in order to put on a pair of the government issue four sizes too big for him, wears a soft hat like a basin crammed on the top of his head, and goes out of his way to get his tunic dirty enough and torn enough to match the rest of his attire. He rides, with rounded back and execrable seat, a tall ewe-necked Rosinante nicknamed the *Kameel*, with an enormous telescope slung by a strap from his shoulder. He is responsible for the collection of 'intelligence,' as it is so ambiguously and amusingly termed, and to this end he employs a staff of Kaffirs, who go out into the highways and byways and hale in other Kaffirs, who repeat in his presence, with

great fervour and unction, lies previously concocted with a view to conciliate. A ferocious-looking savage, Chief of Police, and known as Fanny's 'Brigade Major,' stands menacingly by during Fanny's examination of the terrified informers, and is supposed to knobkerry within an inch of his life any unfortunate who does not make his intelligence intelligible. Fanny, when not riding coolly about in the forefront of the battle, is generally to be found poring over large foolscap sheets of 'intelligence,' in which occasionally he finds precious stones of truth, and still more rarely precious diamonds of truth worth knowing. It generally unfortunately happens that by the time the truth is ascertained it is no longer valuable. Apart from the futility of his vocation, Fanny is a most intelligent person. His intellect is more adapted to work harmoniously with the Major than with the Adjutant, who often forgets that it is the truest wisdom to make the best of a bad job, and who scoffs openly at the expenditure of as much acumen in the cross-examination of Kaffirs as would suffice to make half a dozen reputations in the High Court. Fanny, in fact, is the family controversialist, and his high-pitched flute-like voice may constantly be heard uplifted in academic argument; amid which our genial Irishman intersperses *sotto voce* comments of an unrepeatable nature, and the Adjutant flat contradictions and grunts of supreme disdain. I shall be surprised if Fanny doesn't rise pretty high in his profession, for he has the mind of a lawyer and the pluck of a born fighter.

The Wicked Dwarf, as Charles calls him, is a charming little man, a captain of cavalry, who has just come to us, and is shortly going to leave the main body with a detachment. He has come from the wilds of Central

Africa, where he has done good work in exploring unknown country, and got very red-faced in the process. His favourite weapon is one for dispersing flies—a short stick with a bunch of hair at the end of it. This goes everywhere, so much so that the Irishman declares on oath that the Wicked Dwarf invariably sits in his bath waving his fly-catcher with one hand while he grooms himself with the other.

Another meteor was the Wild Man from Borneo, a Canadian of enormous size, bearded like the pard, who took some more of our men to another division. For several days he kept us open-mouthed with the most blood-curdling tales of Indian carnage, in which a great variety of 'outfits' came to the most tragic ends by the most horrible means. 'Outfit' is a great word. It means everything—from a field force to a portmanteau. Indeed, in the mouth of a skilled Transatlantican, it becomes of universal application, and there is no need to refer more than once to either an errand-boy or a swarm of locusts. Thereafter they are both outfits.

Perhaps Sancho Panza provides us with more fun than anyone else. He is a pure-bred Englishman, who, having spent most of his life in South America, has completely adopted all the customs and costumes of that free-and-easy land. Looseness is the great characteristic of his appearance. In the saddle he is hung about with pots and mugs, and drips fringed and tasselled ponchos. This poncho is a vicuña shawl with a hole in the middle of it, through which Sancho's head emerges. He is never without it. He rides in it, he walks in it, he goes to his bath in it, he sleeps in it. It is at once his towel, cloak, and blanket. He declares that it cost ten pounds in Mexico, and employed I forget how many Indian squaws for three years

in the making. Beneath his loose poncho, which he wears under the hottest midday suns, Sancho wears a loose tunic, round which a loose strap fastens a loose revolver. This is never taken off, for fear of sudden Indian attacks. A pair of loose breeches prove too feeble a support for a pair of loose gaiters, which sprawl helplessly over a pair of loose boots, to which a pair of loose spurs hang limply. Everything about Sancho is aggressively Far Western and Buffalo Billish. His saddle is of the Mexican pattern, with a pommel about a foot high, constructed for holding a lasso. There is nothing to lasso on the veldt, but that is a detail. It is so made, with massive tree and scanty flaps, that no horse can endure it without a dozen rugs and blankets acting as numnahs. These Sancho utilises at night as his bedding. But despite these precautions Sancho's saddle eventually gives every horse he rides a sore back, and he has been known to knock up ten in a fortnight. This horrible engine of torture has two sets of raw-hide girths, one forward, and the other behind, but not even they can prevent the friction caused by the swaying of the lumbering, top-heavy concern. An ordinary English bridle is by no means sufficiently Bronchoish and workmanlike. Sancho's is entirely raw-hide, and calculated, at the lowest computation, to last a hundred years. A score of D's dot the enormous saddle, and from these depend every article known to the war-path. There are mugs, and biltong, and tomahawks, and spare revolver cartridges, and hanks of twine; in short, everything in any way conducive to render a man independent of civilisation. I forget whether Sancho has a servant; I rather think he would regard one as implying a want of proper manliness on the part of the master; at any rate no hand other than his own ever touches the precious saddle and bridle; it

would derogate from the dignity of the original Broncho-tamer if it were noised abroad that luxurious and effete Sancho had delegated to another the risky business of saddling wither-galled Rosinante.

Until Sancho came amongst us we were content with such effeminate cookery as is implied by a stew made by a Kaffir; but Sancho speedily introduced us to robuster and more virile methods. To be dependent on a cook is to be branded as a fool and a waster; you must carry out to its logical conclusions the principle of never allowing another to do for you what you can do for yourself. Accordingly, about four in the morning, the moment the fire is well alight, Sancho prepares himself a breakfast. If there is a sheep or an ox handy which he can slay himself with his long hanger, he is all the better pleased; failing that, a sheep killed overnight will serve his turn. From the carcase he cuts a long series of ribs, slicing and hacking with the complacent skill of a professional butcher. These gory trophies he conveys with huge satisfaction to the fire and props them up near the fiercest blaze with a bit of stick. When the meat is completely black and grimy Sancho whips out his tomahawk again, scrapes off the charcoal, and devours about ten ribs with great speed and the utmost relish, eulogising his culinary product meanwhile under some long Spanish name.

B. and D. are our two colonials, and I am glad to have had the chance of becoming acquainted with two such excellent types of the South African Britisher. Both are splendid shots; D. was all through the siege of Kimberley, and whenever any Boers came within rifle range he was sent for to pick them off, which he frequently did at two thousand yards. He is an enormous fellow, hugely strong, and very silent. B. is well known as an

athlete throughout South Africa; but he is a middle-aged man now. He was promoted from the ranks for rescuing a troop of the —th Hussars from a very difficult position at Colesberg, and since then he has been given his captaincy by a general on the field for his services in finding a body of men whom everyone else had lost. There is not the smallest doubt that he is a man of exceptional military ability, although he was nothing but a struggling farmer when the war broke out. Short, bow-legged, and strongly made, he is the beau ideal of an untirable horse-soldier; and his keen alert eye and determined mouth give you beforehand a pretty good idea of his bravery and resource. I have a great admiration for B., and we have become great friends on the strength of it. It is a melancholy fact, but a true one, that except with a small portion of humanity a man's virtues and great qualities can never counterbalance his small defects. Somehow we can never rid ourselves of petty prejudices in favour of our conventional phrases, customs, accents and manners. This being so, a mixture of British and colonial officers seldom works well. I am sorry to say that I think the fault is generally on the part of those whose great boast it is that they ought to know better. Only the most liberal-minded disregard the external and the transitory, and fix their attention on the essential and the permanent. Consequently, not to put too fine a point upon it, as Mr. Snagsby would say, there is a good deal of condescending and well-mannered contempt on the Sandhurst side, and a good deal of irritated soreness on the other.

I do not mean to say that this feeling has ever reached an acute phase; but it is there, and it is felt. Lapse of time, for this as for everything else, is the only cure. Not so very long ago, a Yankee (as it was the fashion to call

all Americans) was a person to be looked down upon by every self-respecting Englishman. Travel and education and greater intimacy have exploded that fallacy. Americans, notwithstanding their accent, which it is now the fashion to admire, walk on the same social plane as ourselves ; soon there will be scarce a duchess who was not bred across the water. So, in the course of a few years, the impulse that Mr. Chamberlain has given to the process of Imperial assimilation will act and react on the social relations between ourselves and the colonials, and the highest expression of British solidarity will be found in the complete class-fusion of the various portions of our Empire.

Dick you know so well at home that perhaps you fancy you know him on the veldt. So perhaps you would in the family party, where he is slow of speech, judicial in manner, and inclined to be pompous. Everybody, including the colonial officers, was filled with sorrow when Sir A. Milner carried him off to Capetown after Sanna's Post. Most of them had one hackneyed word to describe him : 'he was such a thorough gentleman.' But Dick on the war-path was a revelation to me, and perhaps to others. It was his first campaign ; he only had five months of it, and yet he picked up the moves of the game in a way that mark him out for high promotion. There would have been fewer 'regrettable incidents' if all our generals had learned their lessons as quickly as Dick learned his. The moment he got down to Capetown he employed his leisure in writing a little manual on scouting called 'Notes on Reconnoitring,' of which Baden-Powell would not be ashamed. He has a good title to express opinions and give advice. For it was he who, out on an independent command with forty odd men, found Cronje fleeing after

the relief of Kimberley, and galloped forty miles across the veldt without drawing rein to give the news to Lord Kitchener. But for Dick Master's vigilance and promptitude the surrender of Paardeberg might never have wiped out Majuba. Secondly, it was he who, in the rout at Sanna's Post, was deputed to find a drift over the spruit, and did so with great coolness and speed, under conditions very adverse to both. By so doing he was instrumental in saving many lives and several guns. Of these services Sir A. Milner knows as well as other people, and I think our friend Dick's military prospects are rosy. He well deserves everything he will get, and I make bold to prophesy that he will do his appointments credit as well as himself, because his own advancement is certainly the last thing he bothers about. Without superficial or showy abilities, he possesses a very valuable type of mind, clear, prompt, diligent, steadfast.

But the bivouac-fire is burning low; the Adjutant, wrapped in a huge sheepskin kaross, punctuates the night with snores; the Major, having fallen asleep at dinner, after his wont, still nods uneasily in a battered chair. Like the rest of us, I (although I have come in for my fair share of abuse, especially when I left his favourite Scotch-cart and mules with some guides fifty miles away, and was peremptorily commanded, after having travelled all night, to return forthwith and fetch them back) have a great admiration for our leader. Unlike so many soldiers, he is quite devoid of professional prejudice and pride, and he has a catholic impartiality in the selection of the means best fitted, in his opinion, to secure his ends. This has ever been one of the most marked characteristics of great men. I believe Rimington is capable of very big things. He is a thinker as well as a man of action, and the

combination is rare and potent. His present ambition is to be nominated head of a great South African college, where the young Hooligan of fifteen or so may learn for three years how to ride and shoot and farm, and generally to become a credit to himself and a buttress of England in Africa. Farming, gardening, veterinary, carpentering, and metal-working would be the boys' work; the art of war would be their pastime.

Such an institution ought, after a few years, to become almost self-supporting, and its value to England and to South Africa would be incalculable. Wanted, a 'saintly millionaire' to build and endow. Well, we can only fervently hope that the present system of putting generals who have failed signally in one command into another somewhere else may be superseded, in the interests of efficiency, of justice, and of merit. The system is likely to die hard. I remember a doctor in Delhi poisoned a patient by his flagrant stupidity; the doctor was not dismissed the service: he was sent to a smaller station. Presumably the official argument was that there he would find fewer people to poison. The people in the small station didn't see it. But if, by any good fortune, a new spirit of fairness should, under the present Government, be breathed into the somewhat scandalous methods of army administration, we may look to see those who have proved themselves successes in this war promoted over the heads of those who have done the reverse.

THE TOWNS

You, to whom the word 'town' conveys the idea of mazy streets, massy buildings, congested traffic, and reeking slums, would be reluctant to apply it to the aggregation of detached houses which constitutes a South African town. I do not speak particularly of Capetown, which is old enough to have grown insensibly, in its business quarters, into what even a Cockney would admit to be the genuine article. I do not speak of Johannesburg, the precocious product of the forcing power of gold. The average up-country town has neither age nor wealth to recommend it. It stands on a barren flat; rectangular streets straggle vaguely into nothingness; lines of puny gum-trees give zest to the broad desolation of the roadways; corrugated iron roofs the majority of one-storied houses; here and there a pretentious stone-faced brick edifice advertises a successful shopkeeper.

To European eyes all this is merely a badly-put-together village, with the squire's and the parson's houses dumped down much too near the shops to be pleasant for themselves. But still these centres of life in a new continent have certain advantages over their elder brethren. The distribution of wealth is more equal; if there is no Park Lane, at all events there is no Mile End Road. There is hardly a house, except where the buildings are huddled together in the busiest parts, which is not half-covered with creepers, radiant in their season in purple and orange

and scarlet. The cloudless canopy is not blotted out with smoke ; the untainted breath of the veldt fills the broad boulevards.

South African houses would be nothing without their stoep. Though merely a narrow verandah, it is the peg on which the house is hung ; the stoep is essential, the rest of the house is secondary. A dining-room is a place to eat in ; a bedroom is a place to sleep in ; a study is a place to work in ; the poetry of life gathers round the stoep. There the long armchairs invite to luxurious meditation ; there shade contrasts with the fiery glitter of the outside air ; there the breeze scatters the scent of the pillar-roses. There you can best watch the moon swing over the black trees ; it is almost impossible to imagine a love-scene elsewhere. Children play there ; women work there ; men smoke there. The stoep is the Afrikaner's unconscious tribute to the climate of his country. The Englishman loves his house partly because it is his constant refuge from rain and snow and cold ; the Anglo-Indian loves his bungalow because therein, after closing every crack and cranny, he obtains a bare victory over the hated enemy without ; but the Afrikaner has neither of these reasons for loving his home ; he loves the veldt, and the air of the veldt, and the stoep is just the veldt mitigated with flowers and shade, and books, and love, and music.

The club is a feature of English life, but in South Africa it has reached its apotheosis. Probably a good many reasons contribute to this. The climate is hot, and drink is grateful, and there is not so much family life in a community where many of the men are unmarried, and many of the wives of those who are married live in England. But the chief reason, I think, consists in the extraordinary political activity of Afrikanders. Men in

this country leave their political fortunes in the hands of a limited class, in the profound conviction that things couldn't be worse. In Africa the English Afrikaners are a limited class, and they realise fully that things might be worse. For many years they have had to combine and fight for things which we got centuries ago, and are now not in the least concerned about or grateful for. They have had to fight for their existence against the black men, and for their political supremacy against the Dutch. These two vital issues have kept political interest up to fever-heat, and the clubs are the focus of discussion and wire-pulling.

Until you have been in the country it is difficult to realise the complexity of the conditions which have gradually led up to this war. In the Transvaal and the Free State you found Dutch political supremacy menaced by the wealth and industry of the resident British; in the Colony you found British political supremacy menaced by the numbers and Pan-African aspirations of the Dutch. Everywhere you found large bodies of men united by a desire to upset the government under which they lived. Everywhere you found British and Dutch living nominally on good terms side by side; in many cases you found the two races related by ties of blood. As a resultant from the intermixture, you frequently found Dutchmen who were friendly towards England, and Britishers who had thrown in their lot with the Dutch. Confusion could not be worse confounded. Houses were divided against themselves; brother fought against brother, and father against son. When I arrived in the land, war had been in progress for several months, and consequently men had openly ranged themselves on one side or the other. Yet even so there remained a vast number who preferred to sit

still and say nothing ; Dutchmen suspected by the British of complicity with their enemies, and British eyed askance by the Dutch. The atmosphere reeked of distrust. My friend, Mr. Smith, told me that in Bloemfontein, before and after the declaration of war, it was impossible for an Englishman safely to open his mouth in the company of his best friend. Spies and informers thronged the streets ; a chance phrase of ambiguous import was enough to consign the speaker across the Portuguese border. Of course this was to be expected in a state of war ; the peculiar feature of this war is that so many of the enemy on either side are permitted to reside quietly amongst their foes. The fact is, of course, traceable to the intermixture by blood and domicile before alluded to—an intermixture perhaps unique in the history of the world.

It is the custom to attribute the conspicuous humanity displayed on both sides in this war to the knowledge that the combatants will subsequent to it have to live side by side, but in my opinion the argument is of the academic, analytical, *ex post facto* kind which looms so large in modern histories, and beside which the psychological novel is a straightforward narrative of fact. The ordinary uneducated man is not influenced at all by considerations of pure reason and expediency, nor does he ever remember that the collective actions of units form the policy of the nation. The burgher was kind to our wounded because he constantly expected to see, and often did see, amongst them the face of a relation or of a friend. The South African volunteers were influenced by the same feelings, and the British army generally understood the situation, and sympathised with both sides. Never, as Lord Roberts declared in answer to some libellous aspersion on our gallant comrades, did an army treat its foe with such con-

sideration as the British treated the Dutch. I am bound to say that I think the converse holds good too.

But when I first got to know the club in South Africa the darkest days of unrest and doubt had passed away for ever.

At Capetown the most virulent political foes dine side by side with the confidence of men who hit hard in fair fight; but still there were whispers of traitors in the midst, and men talked of the probabilities of a rising headed, perhaps, by the man smoking in the chair next yours.

Kimberley swarmed with suspects. Men who had given the besiegers every possible clandestine help, and who had gone smiling to their stations as the days wore on and no relief came, out-heroded the noisiest Jingo over whiskies and soda at the club, and stood the relieving soldiers drinks with a genial *bonhomie* that was the admiration of their friends. The Spartan boy whose bosom the fox gnawed hardly displayed more stoicism than did these disappointed pro-Boers.

In the days of their military occupation (and it is difficult to overrate the hospitality of the members everywhere) the clubs put on a new aspect. They swarmed from cellar to garret with soldiers. Generals took the bedrooms, colonels took the stoep; at all hours of the day the rooms were packed with khaki. People sat on the tables because there were not enough chairs; the barmen were continually besieged by a dusty crowd clamouring for drinks. Nothing could be got unless purchased on the 'chit' system; a ten or twenty shilling book of chits (or coupons) had to be bought, and the value of each drink was torn out of it. The humble copper is not recognised in lordly Africa; the

tikky, or threepenny bit, is the lowest denomination. The average price of whisky was ten shillings a bottle, and I once had to give a sovereign for a bottle of reputed brandy, which I took out to Mr. Edwards; but none of us could stomach it. Before the hours of lunch and dinner the dining-room door was always locked; when all was ready a bell rang, and immediately a jostling throng surged into the place, and within two minutes not a chair was vacant. I have seen hungry subalterns, who hadn't had a square meal for weeks, standing outside the dining-room door, waiting for it to open, for all the world like the mob waiting outside the distributing shops in Kimberley for their turn to receive their siege rations. The key to the proper understanding of South African society is the recognition of the fact that every man is the product of his own labour or his own cunning, or the want of them. There is no hereditary moneyed class, save about Capetown, and consequently the deference paid to that class in this country is never part of a colonist's business equipment. A shopkeeper will tell you bluntly that he is 'out of hats,' sitting on his counter swinging his legs. The honorific 'sir' is rarely or never heard. Even in a place as large as Bloemfontein the men who have received a gentleman's education could be counted on the fingers of one hand. The finest shop in that town, where you can buy any mortal thing, and where I obtained, very cheap, an excellent sponge, which I use to this day, is owned by a German Jew who began life as a tinsmith, wandering about the country doctoring pots and pans. To-day he is probably worth a hundred thousand pounds.

Another general dealer, of equally humble antecedents, is credibly reported to have turned over five hundred pounds a day during the first week of our occupation. These

men make a very creditable show ; their shops are of brick faced with stone, and their villas stand in pretty gardens in the suburbs. But as yet æstheticism has not made much progress. One of the most pretentious buildings giving on the market-square in Bloemfontein is what we should call a public-house. The authorities, with a quaint blending of the sublime and the ridiculous, have cut for all time in the stone cornice the legend, 'O.F.S. Bottle Store.' It may be necessary, for aught I know, that every Free State should possess a store of bottles ; but only a Dutchman could be sufficiently lacking in humour to go and carve domestic details of that sort over the portals of a rather smart-looking hostel. Next door a similar edifice proudly announces in large letters to the world that it is the 'Athletic Hotel.' One expects to find a trapeze in the smoking-room, and waiters steeplechasing over chairs down the passages ; but visitors have assured me that in reality such is not the case. A walk round the town often provides one with delightful surprises. One morning you have a talk with a shopkeeper of apparently the most pronounced Anglican views, and the next day you hear that he is in jail for holding truck with the enemy. Our people, at the battle of Enslin, took prisoner a gentleman wearing a German artillery uniform, who waved a dissecting-knife, and protested that he was a surgeon. After a bit they let him go. In Bloemfontein they go into the shop of a chemist who proclaims his name to be Hockapple, and behold the shock-headed hero of Enslin, divested of his uniform and dissecting-knife, and selling boluses with professional suavity. When the conversation is led round to the battle of Enslin he becomes nervous ; his touse of hair visibly erects itself ; he is in an agony over the thought of that artillery uniform. What if the

Provost Marshal should hear of it and discommons him? He presses his most cherished possessions on his visitors at merely nominal prices, and they depart convinced of his guilt.

The hirsute Hockapple reminds me of a story Charles is fond of telling, illustrative of the tendency all through this war for a man to sell you a pill one day and put a bullet through you the next. A party of British soldiers, under the command of an officer, went out on a foraging expedition and stopped at a farm. There they bought all manner of good things, and, having duly paid for them, departed rejoicing. At once a heavy fire was opened on them from the windows of the farm, and they all bit the dust, except the officer. Him the Boers captured, and led back to the farm. 'Why did you let me off?' he asked. 'Because,' they replied, 'we saw that you put all the eggs in your hat, and if you had fallen off we should not have got them to sell to the next fool of an Englishman who comes this way.'

Looking on the square are the offices of the now defunct 'Bloemfontein Express'—one of the most violently anti-British and scurrilous of the South African newspapers. I have by me an extract from a very recent issue, in which British soldiers are accused of horrible outrages on Boer women, in which they are said to have been helped by Kaffirs. I need hardly tell you that the whole story is a gigantic lie, circulated in order to lash the burghers to the utmost fury against us. The owner and editor of this rag was one Borckenhagen, a man whose name is coupled with Reitz, by those who understand the inner workings of Bond politics, for influence and activity in advocating aggression on British rights and power. He came by his end in a drunken brawl, slain by

a German at a dinner held in honour of the Kaiser's birthday.

A little farther down the street is the house of a certain Mr. ——. He has been twice married, and is now engaged for the third time. The first wife burnt herself; the second poisoned herself; malicious gossip is now speculating as to whether the third wife will drown or hang herself. There seems to be no reasonable doubt of the certainty of one or other contingency.

South African towns teem with funny characters; I wish I had been longer in them to gather up more crumbs of anecdote and manners. Charles says that when he was at Ladysmith there was living in the outskirts of the town a deaf subaltern, who had married a deaf wife. With them came to stay a deaf mother-in-law and a deaf sister-in-law. There being inadequate accommodation for visitors in the house, owing to the requirements of a large deaf family, the mother-in-law and sister-in-law camped out in tents in the garden. The racecourse was deserted, the clubs closed; for many weeks all Ladysmith lived in the road, listening to the conversations that passed between the house and the tents.

In Kimberley I saw and heard many interesting things. The shells did incredibly little damage. I believe that during the whole siege only seven people were killed by them—five native women, a civilian, and a baby. There was Mr. Benny's house, the whole of the top of which was carried away by a shell, while eleven people in it escaped unscratched. I saw the hole in the wall of the hotel made by the shell which killed Mr. Labram, the designer of 'Long Cecil.' This unfortunate gentleman seems to have been dogged by an almost superhuman malevolence. The Boers were told by spies where he lived, and they killed

him. As the funeral cortège left the hotel a rocket was fired within the town by a spy, and immediately a shell from 'Long Tom' landed close by. While the service was being read at the grave-side a second rocket warned the Boers where to aim, and a second discharge from 'Long Tom' narrowly missed the mourners. I saw a paving-stone which a shell had lifted fifteen feet on to the balcony of a house. I went into the tunnel of the Kimberley mine, wherein eight hundred or so women and children lived from a Sunday to a Thursday. Two hundred yards down in the bowels of the earth they were huddled together so thick on the ground that all could not sit down at the same time; lamps glared through the darkness night and day, water swished along the floor and dripped from overhead, cockroaches innumerable crept amid the puddles. I saw the look of pleased surprise on the faces of the officers of the garrison when first the commissariat enabled the club cook to give us two courses of meat at lunch. But of all the things I saw and heard the most interesting was Mr. Cecil Rhodes. He lived out on the skirts of the town, in a huge, roomy, airy building called the Sanatorium, which the Boers had for many long weeks unavailingly made the objective of 'Long Tom's' serenadings.

I was honoured by an invitation to lunch with him there, and eagerly accepted. The size of the man corresponds with his works; everything about Mr. Rhodes is big. He stands about six feet one; his figure is of the corpulent, elephantine kind; his large, square, ruddy face is set on handsomely. His iron-grey, tumbled hair falls in waves over a tremendous head; his grey-blue eyes are extraordinarily quick and piercing, yet kindly withal; his chin is monumental. But the most wonderful thing is the voice. It runs up the whole tetrachord, beginning

in the bass and ending almost in a falsetto. The lowing of a cow exactly represents it. The general effect of the man is to create an impression of exuberant vitality and power. Genial candour seemed to me the dominant characteristic ; he was frankly good-natured, and frankly egotistical. He directed the talk continually into the channels that interested him rather than his guests. Beyond a chance kindly word he took no notice of the two distinguished persons on either side of him, and roared questions down the table to a trio of farmers from the neighbourhood, who had just escaped from the pillagings of the Boers. He wanted to know the minutest details, how many trek-oxen had been commandeered, and how much hard cash. His conclusion was that the victimised trio might think themselves lucky to get off so cheaply. Apparently some rebels from the Colony were amongst the Boers who plundered the farmers, and Rhodes was hugely amused, and laughed Homerically when one of them told him that these men had said, 'We don't mind giving three cheers for the Queen, and damn Cecil Rhodes !' 'My constituents too,' roared Rhodes ; 'how devilish ungrateful of them !'

Then his relations with the military during the siege cropped up, and Rhodes said : 'It's impossible to work with soldiers, they're so unbusinesslike.' And later : 'Why, what d'you think ? I wrote an article in the paper here, the best article they ever had, and the soldiers wanted to put me in prison for it !'

If Rhodes was a person whom the Governor disdained to consult, Lord Roberts did not share his view. He wired to Mr. Rhodes in Kimberley, rather than to the heads of the military there, when he wanted something big done quickly. How fortunate for the Empire that the

head of our army is not a pettifogging red-tapeist ! He is big enough to meet Rhodes on equal terms. Even in small things Rhodes seems to be pugnacious and masterful. He drank hock and soda at lunch, and asked for a tumbler. They brought him a large one, and he peremptorily ordered them to bring him another slightly smaller. A story is told of an officer who knew one of Rhodes's brothers, and made the fact an opening on introduction.

'Oh, you know my brother, do you ? My brother's a loafer !' 'But he's a most charming fellow,' said the soldier. 'I tell you he's a loafer,' said Rhodes. 'He walks, rides, shoots, and fishes ; and every man who does that is a loafer. If you do it you're a loafer.'

I don't think anyone can help liking Mr. Rhodes ; his sincerity and directness seemed to me so admirable in contrast with the artificial self-effacement so fashionable nowadays. It is a thousand times better that a man should talk of himself, his hopes, and his projects in the most unblushingly egotistical strain than that he should hazard thin and vapid commonplaces about general topics. I must say I love meeting self-centred men ; you learn something about life from them. The rest are too often merely diluted leading articles. After lunch, by my host's kindness, I was given a pass to visit his famous garden at Kenilworth. The vast yellow plain surges round this little green island, wherein the Kaffirs employed in the mines have their model dwelling-places. Each separate well-built cottage is bowered in the shade of beef-wood trees, pines, and eucalyptus ; climbing plants cover the walls ; flowers blaze in the little gardens ; broad well-laid roads bordered by avenues lead easily to Kimberley and the mines. You cannot see either the one or the others from that umbrageous nook, and you give thanks for it.

Kimberley is a reddish-brown blotch on the veldt; the mines, with their gallows-like gear and blue-grey mountains and valleys of refuse, are as hideous to behold as any objects on which the sun shines. The *sanctum sanctorum* of this delightful oasis, which, I must not forget to add, has grown at the bidding of water from the Wesselton mine, is Mr. Rhodes's garden, where more than fifty acres are under fruit and flowers. I soon found Mr. Fenner, Mr. Rhodes's gardener, and he very kindly took me everywhere. A most magnificent sight was the vine trellis, eight feet broad, eight feet high, and five hundred and twenty-three yards long, covered with thousands upon thousands of bunches of black and white grapes, hanging in glorious contrast from among the yellowing leaves. It was a sight to move Bacchus himself. In normal times these grapes are sold at nominal prices to the employees, white and black, of De Beers, and to them only. During the siege all the fruit in the garden was given away to the very poor. 'Yes, Mr. Rhodes is a funny gentleman,' said Mr. Fenner, as we walked down the pergola, while I made up for several weeks without vegetables by gorging about ten pounds of grapes. 'One day, in this very avenue, he says to me, "Fenner, go and get me a rose." I was going towards the end of the trellis to get to the roses, when he calls out: "Why don't you get through the trellis? It's the quickest way." I stopped and tried to get through a place a cat could hardly have managed, and you can see what I'm like for yourself. At that Mr. Rhodes burst out laughing, and cried out: "Oh, you damned fool, Fenner; can't you see you're too fat?" I couldn't see where the fun came in myself, but Mr. Rhodes laughed fit to kill himself.'

I encouraged my guide to talk about his master, and remarked that though he took such pains to have splendid fruit all the year round there was no vestige of it at his luncheon. 'Mr. Rhodes is very particular about his fruit,' said Mr. Fenner. 'He will never touch it except he picks it off the tree himself. He comes down here most days and eats a lot. In the hottest weather he will come and spend the best part of the day under the trees here, and very often he will strip and sit under a tree eating peaches, while a Zulu chucks buckets of cold water over him.'

Thus, amid the trees and the fruit and the flowers, I spent one of the pleasantest hours I had in Africa, in the beloved creation and retreat of the greatest of her great men. The next morning I had to leave purse-proud, hub-of-the-universal Kimberley, and the one abiding conviction I took away with me was that amid a narrow, greedy, sublunary society the nature of Cecil Rhodes glittered like a diamond in the clay—large-minded, bright-hearted, unbreakable, a thing for all time.

The towns, especially Bloemfontein, outside which we stayed six weeks, were naturally the chief centres for the observation of what may be called the peaceful side of war. I shall never forget the extraordinary impression created on my mind, after weeks spent in exclusively male society, and amid all the horrors and blasphemies and filthiness of constant fighting, by the sight of three pretty little girls in sun-bonnets and spotless muslin frocks giving cigarettes to the first soldiers who rode into Bloemfontein. They seemed almost like beings from another sphere, so strangely delicate and pure they looked amongst that stained and bronzed and battered throng.

Church in that town, too, was the most impressive

ceremony. I used to ride in, every Sunday I was not on duty, across the four miles of flat unbroken veldt. The cemetery lies on the outskirts of the town, close to the road we had to take, fenced with aloes and eucalyptus. Within the gates gleaming marble crosses and gloomy cypress-trees mingle their contrasts. When first we came the grass waved green over the ground, and every headstone was of stone or marble; but now, alas! not a day passes but some fresh-turned earth betokens a soldier's grave, some rude new wooden cross a soldier's elegy. Below, the tents of the —th Brigade lay dotted over the slopes; above, the first building of Monument Street, stands one of the many hospitals of Bloemfontein. There is crowded into a hundred yards the whole epitome of life; the joyous shout of vigorous strength, the stifled moan of suffering, and the silence of the tomb. The cathedral is a large red-brick building, the only stone used in its construction being the pillars which support the arches of the aisles. The general effect is simple and severe, as befits the sanctuary.

Soldiers nearly filled the church, but here and there civilians were dotted about, and the vast monotone of khaki was occasionally broken by the red-and-blue uniform of a nursing sister. Many of the women were in deepest mourning. It was strange to see a fragile woman and her fair-skinned child hedged in between rows of burly dark-bronzed men; but they were all British there, all fellow-sufferers alike, though in different ways, by the curse of war. There seemed to me something unutterably pathetic in the prayer and praise of those splendid men.

Some of them, for certain, were listening to the old familiar words for the last time; all were singing the songs of Zion in a strange land, far away from those with whom

they were wont to worship, uncertain as to what Fate might have in store for them and theirs. Even now I cannot think of the singing of that most beautiful hymn, 'Peace, perfect peace,' by that deep-voiced mass, without the tears springing into my eyes :

'Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away?
In Jesus' keeping we are safe and they.
Peace, perfect peace, Death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus has vanquished Death and all its powers.'

Easter came before the advance, and the triumph of the Easter hymns surged upwards from a thousand soldiers' lips. Lord Roberts never missed the morning service. Undistinguishable from the crowd unless by his white hair and the band of crape about his arm, the Commander-in-Chief was the last to enter and the first to go. Surrounded by his aides-de-camp, he sat alone in the front pew, beneath the pulpit. There can have been but few amongst his fellow-worshippers who forgot to breathe a prayer for the protection and comfort of that heroic man ; so brave in the hour of danger, so steadfast in the hour of affliction, so merciful in the hour of victory. More than three-quarters of the congregation were in the habit of staying for the Communion service, and the places of those who left were speedily taken by others. Far from home and those we loved, surrounded by foes hungry for our lives, in the participation of that sacred rite we realised the power of the spirit to annihilate time and space, the certainty of eternal union with those we love, the truth of the Infinite and Unknowable.

'O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?'

BOOT AND SADDLE

THE Irish private is reported to have said, 'What between drill and drink, I'm fair mulvattered!' In Rimington's there was no drill, no drink, and no consequent 'mulvattering.' At least, the drink and the drill were so limited in quantity as to be innocuous. It is true that, as regards the first, there was an intermittent and spasmodic ration of rum served out to the troops, which did everybody nothing but good, except on one memorable occasion when by some chance a whole keg of rum came into our possession. The guard mounted over the aforesaid keg made the most of their exceptional opportunities. They became stupendously 'mulvattered'; and next day the Major tied them up to the wheels of waggons—awful examples to the righteous few who had arrived in the guard tent after all the rum had disappeared.

As regards the second, Charles had laid the foundations of a rudimentary cavalry drill on the nucleus of the corps at De Aar. Advancing by sections and thereafter forming troops were two of the commands forgotten neither by officers nor men. This was quite enough to get your men on and off a parade-ground with credit, especially as right and left wheel are things within the range of the average lay understanding; but the lore of some of our more enthusiastic spirits did not end here. They welcomed any opportunity for the separate drilling of their troops; they plunged boldly into the intricacies

of dismounted and firing drill; they gave the correct commands in the wrong sequence with immense satisfaction to themselves, provided neither the Adjutant nor the Major was within earshot; they wheeled and changed the front of their troops with a rapidity which would have suggested either panic or dementia on the field of battle; they lamed scores of horses by wild charges at full gallop across ground wrinkled with sluits and pitted with ant-bear and mere-cat holes.

Fortunately the opportunities for such displays were very rare. Everybody knew that in the real business the technicalities of drill are unheeded by officers and men. There is an object to be attained; it is realised by all; a few general directions in advance supply the place of a thousand subsequent commands. But in standing camps the Major was occasionally oppressed by an uneasy conviction that his men were rusting, and then, for two mortal hours in the morning, occurred those fearful exercises which I am told constitute the Alpha and Omega of the regular cavalry soldier's science. Apart from these we had few drillings, and less need of them. Nothing can possibly tend more surely to dull the keen edge of intelligence and destroy individual interest and initiative than the constant repetition of formal manœuvres. Nobody recognised this more fully than the Major, but he is always for doing something. A long spell of idleness got on his nerves, and if he couldn't fight he was obliged to be at something which the War Office, if not he, thought conducive to victory. On such festivals the Major shouted a great deal, and sometimes appeared to get angry; the Adjutant galloped about on a faultlessly turned-out pony, doing his best to keep things right, and smiling sardonically when they all went wrong. Squadron

leaders ignorantly cursed their troop leaders, and troop leaders sweated with perplexed responsibility. There was a great deal of talking in the ranks; a large proportion of horses fell out lame and blown; official relations were strained for at least half an hour afterwards. Thus you will rightly gather that if any measure of success attended our arms it is not to be attributed to the methods of previous training in vogue amongst the orthodox military. I am not sure whether I have told you what those arms were. Non-commissioned officers and men carried a Martini-Metford carbine, a ridiculous little pea-shooter whose only advantage is its lightness. They also carried a bandolier in which they were required constantly to keep seventy cartridges. Officers carried anything or nothing. Charles never burdened his horse with a pound more than he could help; I never saw him wearing a revolver; I doubt very much if he had one. The Major carried a Mauser pistol; Dick Master at one time carried both a carbine and a revolver, but finally discarded the carbine; others had Webley revolvers; I generally took my Lee-Metford carbine in a bucket, where it was out of the way and yet handy for a shot if necessary. Hundreds and thousands of officers have gone through this war without having themselves fired a round at the Boers; of course it is not their business to shoot, and in many cases they have more important duties to perform; but I should personally have felt as if I was wasting my time if I hadn't taken every opportunity of having a smack at my brother Boer. At any rate I had the advantage over every trooper in our force in possessing a much more effective weapon. The Martini-Metford carbine is not a fit instrument to put in the hands of a soldier; you might as well give him an arquebus or a Brown Bess. What

can he and his popgun hope to achieve against an enemy armed with a Mauser? I doubt if the Martini-Metford carbine carries with any semblance of accuracy over six hundred yards. The Mauser carries over two thousand. I once had a good opportunity of practically testing the difference between them. Not very far north of Brandfort, when we were escort to a battery, we came upon a farm. Rimington ordered our squadron to take the farm. After a smart engagement we forced the Boers to retire to an open ridge, about fifteen hundred yards from the farm, which we occupied. I was running about the farmyard, catching geese by the primitive method of stoning them, when one of my troop pointed out to me that a couple of bullets had just missed my legs. I looked round, and sure enough the sandy ground spurted again to a bullet. So I collected a few of the best shots I could find, and got them behind a wall, and told them to dislodge the Boers, who were plainly visible on the ridge. If our weapons had carried the distance it is certain that the Boers must have cleared out; but our fire affected them not at all. The obvious inference was that they were out of range of our toys. It is quite certain that the first and obvious duty of the War Office is to re-arm existing corps which at present are handicapped with obsolete patterns of guns and rifles. One of the standing proofs of the imbecility of those responsible for national defence is the fact that our garrison artillery is still to a large extent muzzle-loading. What a splendid account Fort Popton would give of itself if attacked by a couple of French battle-ships! A cat spitting at a pom-pom could hardly do more.

Besides his carbine and ammunition, each man carried a cloak, a blanket, and rations for himself and his horse.

Rations for himself resolved themselves oftenest into a couple of biscuits, sometimes humanised by the remnant of a tin of bully beef. The ration-biscuit is just like a small dog-biscuit to look at, to smell, and to taste, and if it were not so geologically hard it would be capital. Bully beef is red, corned, tinned beef, excellent in its way, and warranted to give you a thirst which, out of Africa, you would not sell for gold. But where the only drink is very muddy water, sometimes flavoured with dead mule, such thirsts are not cultivated. I left England with a pocket filter and a fixed determination never to drink unboiled water. That excellent intention is now, with a good many others, acting as a paving-stone on the road to Gehenna. You might as well have expected a drowning man to reject any rope not woven of silken strands. In the middle of the day there was no opportunity to boil water. I certainly carried and used my filter—a small black object with a tube to it—amidst a certain amount of chaff from ribald friends demanding if my nurse had filled my bottle properly, and whether the stomach-pump worked all right. But the day came when a surgeon and a colonel, both men of great practical experience, assured me that the pocket filter is the most specious of poison-traps, and my faith in it died. They said that the first time of using it you experienced nothing more objectionable than the vile taste of gutta-percha, but that if, *ex hypothesi*, there was poison in the water, all subsequent draughts, even from a pure source, served only to transmit the original contamination through the carbon into the system. Thereafter I ceased to believe in human prophylactics. With the Mohammedan I cried ‘Kismet!’ I ceased to boil and filter. My only consolation was that some birds eat sand to aid their digestions. I tried to

persuade myself that my stomach, also, was of a bird-like nature.

If an observer, entirely ignorant of our purpose, had stated as his opinion that the sole object of the British troops in South Africa was to amplify and vary the diet provided them by Government, he ought by no means to have incurred the charge of superficiality. The subconscious idea of every man, on the march, on patrol, scouting, or within a captured town, was to obtain something to eat, both for himself and his horse. This determination coloured the whole bent of our progress. We dashed towards a farm, ostensibly to capture burghers and discover buried rifles ; in reality to buy excellent loaves at two shillings apiece, and long drinks of sour milk at a tikky. A spruit sheltered by trees would be a likely lurking-place for snipers ; it would also be just the spot where tame ducks most delight to congregate. Abandoned houses and huts were searched minutely from rafter to flooring for hidden stores of mealies, and indiscreet hens in the vicinity were pursued and captured with a speed which argued volumes for the agility of our troopers. Some men had a faculty for precipitating themselves bodily, while running desperate sprints, on the top of fleet escaping fowls, which always commanded my most respectful admiration. I never knew which to pity most, the men or the hen.

The extemporised battues which frequently took place, not by special invitation of the owners, on the duck-ponds of our enemies, were scenes of carnage beside which battles paled. A duck-pond in South Africa is generally a spruit, or brook. Accordingly the object was to drive the game up the spruit to some point where a 'stop' could, without getting absolutely wet through, harvest the

quick and the dead. Each man seized all the stones he could find, and launched them at the quacking brood. Flappings, churnings of the water, frenzied cries made pandemonium ; half a dozen poor maimed birds wobbled feebly, like rudderless ships, in the middle of the pool ; the 'stop' had bagged as many more. It was a war of extermination ; there were many more men than ducks, and this was at once the reason for the policy of no quarter and the secret of its absolute success.

Such victims were always paid for, though not always at the rates suggested by the breeders. I remember a sullen-looking farmer near Kroonstad saying, in reply to Rimington, after a nice lot of fat white Aylesburys had been duly gaffed and landed, 'I get half a guinea apiece for those ducks.' 'Half a guinea !' roared Rimington in volcanic eruption. 'You infernal renegade' (the man had left Natal for the Free State), 'if you talk much more to me like that I'll clap you in the place where you ought to be—prison in Kroonstad ! You'll get a shilling apiece for them, and you may think yourself very lucky to get that.' It was at this same farm that we were solemnly assured that there was no butter. A careful search disclosed two huge pails chock-full of that most excellent condiment. We ate it with the satisfaction of men who, by the detection of lying, please themselves and save their country's pocket. One of the most ironical farces ever enacted was the practice of chalking up Britain's debt to an absentee owner of property on the door of his derelict dwelling. 'I have to-day requisitioned ten fowls, two sacks of mealies, and forty bundles of oat-straw for the use of her Majesty's troops, for which payment will be made in due course.' Signed and dated. If neither the rain nor the first circumambient Kaffir obliterated the record, it is

possible that Boers have been seen approaching the offices of the Provost Marshal with these pocket memoranda slung on their backs, but I do not think it is likely. Another military fiction was the penalty for looting. Looting was a comprehensive term, and the fact that a man had paid for his loot in hard cash was, as far as I can learn, only arguable in mitigation of punishment. The irrebuttable presumption was that the goods were stolen ; that loot was loot. Yet it is certain that a vast number of chickens and ducks and loaves were actually paid for by soldiers out of their own pockets. Anyway, it went round that Lord Roberts was all for hanging any man found with a feathered biped in his possession. One day Fanny took me to task severely because I rode into camp with a duck and a hen gracing the flaps of my saddle. ' You will be hanged when you're caught,' he remarked sagaciously. My impending fate, however, had no bad effect on his appetite when my booty came up cooked ; he laboured disinterestedly, and with entire success, to remove all traces of my folly. The next day the following revolutionary edict came out in brigade orders : ' Loot must not be carried openly on the saddle.' Fanny's scandalised discomfiture was delightful. It was a terrible shock to his faith in the Persian immutability of military regulations. To him it was as though the Chief Commissioner of Police had publicly said, ' Murderers are requested to put the bodies where constables can't find them.' Naturally, after this, even the august vicinity of generals did not deter the looter. I have actually seen a man stop on the march (heretofore a very heinous crime) when within measurable distance of the enemy, and carefully stalk a long line of waddling geese. He got within twenty yards, made a tremendous rush, lifted his stick for a ponderous stroke on the hind-

most goose, and brought it down on vacancy. The goose flew cackling away, attended by his mates, and a thousand watching soldiers re-echoed their gibes.

Near Abraam's Kraal, when we had halted in dense column, a wretched hare got up in the midst of five thousand infantrymen. You never heard such a hubbub in your life. The hare doubled and twisted and jumped and rushed, but the odds against her were too great. A gigantic fellow timed himself with beautiful accuracy to fall on her, and she was no more. A friend of mine, in an infantry regiment, told me that his men on the march had bayoneted several panic-stricken springbuck, which had got between two columns, and rushed in terror on the leading files. I think I have already told you of the springbuck killed by shell-fire at Driefontein, which jubilant troopers carried home to supper. This kind of battle-field loot was rare, but there were a good many cases, not published in the newspapers, in which fortunate searchers came upon treasure on the dead bodies of their foes. A Canadian in Colonel Pilcher's force, which took Sunnyside, told me that he had found a belt of seventy golden sovereigns under the waistcoat of a slain rebel. He also told me that he had spent the said seventy sovereigns in the course of the next week, which, considering the condition of the country he was in, was an almost incredible feat. But when he had further informed me that he was an actor when he was at home I began to give him credence, for it is the business of actors to create imaginary situations.

I regret to say I never had the temerity to do any body-searching. There are a variety of reasons why it would be risky and unpleasant. The best reason of all is that the Boers, even if they leave their dead behind,

nearly always relieve them of their mundane valuables. The infantry who get in with the bayonet are perhaps the only people who get a good chance in this direction. My own most valued piece of loot was Dutchman, the pony I snaffled at Paardeberg. While most of the fortunate few who came first into the Boer laager were hunting for miscellaneous rubbish in the trenches, I kept my eye on a small mob of horses which had escaped the lyddite. Finally I selected and managed, with the help of a Kaffir, to catch a great ugly dun-coloured beast, well up to my weight. Him I led back to the drift, and then, drinking from the river, I suddenly espied a most beautiful bay horse. I determined to have him too, and making a boy hold my dun friend by the ear I took the headstall and went down and caught Dutchman. A lieutenant of the *Doris* came by as I returned, and as he wanted a horse I gave him the dun. He led him away by the ear, and when I last saw the couple the dun was forcibly pulling the reluctant lieutenant in the direction of some distant pasture.

Derelict houses were always left in a terrible mess. Everything of real value and portable had been removed, and the rest was littered anyhow about the floors. I remember, the day after the battle of Poplar Grove, we moved on to a farm (Charlie Ortell's) near the river, about four miles from our last night's bivouac, which, by the way, was foul with the refuse of the Boers, studded with sheep's paunches, sticky with mud, and full of all uncleanness. Ortell's Farm stands in a grove of poplars and mimosa, backed by the river, facing a large dam, and green with the greenness of abundant irrigation. The plastered mud one-storied house was a complete wreck internally, chairs, bottles, straw, clothes, beds, and

photographs lying scattered and shattered over the floors. Without, several pigs roamed at large, and we were hungry. I unslung my revolver and had some exciting shooting. Finally two wounded porkers were successively pinned by a sporting terrier by the hind leg, when I gave them their quietus. This terrier became the property of one of our troopers, and a great pet under the name of Tiger. She came to Bloemfontein with the corps, and finally was stolen by Kaffirs, to everybody's sorrow. There was another dog at Ortell's, which I appropriated. He was a liver-coloured, short-legged pointer, with a dash of bloodhound in him. He had a capital nose, and we looked forward to many a good day's shooting over him. But, alas! after many escapes and recaptures the ungrateful Poplar (as we called him, partly in honour of Poplar Grove, and partly because, as Mr. Sponge would say, he was such 'an amaazin' pop'lar' dog) finally broke away from the back of the ambulance waggon, and was no more seen. This callous brutality in leaving pets behind to starve illustrates the worst side of the Boer's character.

The duties of mounted troops, such as ours, may be subdivided as follows:—1. Patrols; 2. Scouting; 3. Escort duty.

On the march, troops which are neither scouting nor doing escort duty may be fulfilling other functions, such as baggage-guard; but I except these, as requiring no further distinct performance other than that required by proximity.

1. Patrols are a very useful and necessary part of the life of standing camps. They may be of two sorts: (i.) officer's patrol, (ii.) non-commissioned officer's patrol. The former is sent out when skilled observation or detailed report is required; the latter when neither is of such

importance as the mere 'making good,' as soldiers say, of the 'front.' A patrol is, in short, a body of mounted men, varying in number from ten to fifty, sent out to scour the country in the immediate front, or vulnerable flank, of a larger body of stationary troops. Making good the front is the process of ascertaining that no enemy is lurking in such proximity to the main body as to menace its security. I frequently had the office of commanding a patrol under the direct orders of our temporary brigadier—Colonel Alderson—a soldier whose record in South Africa is of the very first order. He has given evidence of his capacity in several excellent books, especially one on the relation between hunting and soldiering. I was astonished at the minute attention which a man in his position found time to devote both to the previous instruction of patrols and to the reports they brought in. He taught us to make every use of all our senses; and no doubt his success is in no small degree attributable to his practice of getting the best out of his subordinates.

I look back with keen pleasure on the work of patrolling in which I took part. In the first place it was not exhausting work; three or four hours sufficed to traverse a very large extent of country. The object of a patrol should not be to draw the enemy's fire, and thereby perhaps suffer loss, but to make sure that the country intervening between camp and the recognised lines of the enemy is free from hostile influence. To this end a pair of good field-glasses is the first essential; then natives must be interrogated; suspected houses must be searched; every likely cover must be explored. The greatest care must be taken that in the process the enemy does not swoop down between you and your base. Minor objects are the procuring of supplies of fodder, cattle, and horses belonging

to the enemy, but it will be difficult to cut off these without running the risk of an engagement, and I remember that Colonel Alderson was very strong on the point that under no circumstances was a patrol wantonly to draw the enemy's fire. It is curious how events arrange themselves. One day I took a patrol towards Thaba Nchu, which has always seemed a favourite Boer stronghold. There were a couple of farms close together on the limit of our explorations, and at both we were hospitably received, and given coffee and rusks. The next day a patrol from another regiment visited the same farms, and were received with a volley which forced them to retire. Beside the constant pleasure of alertness, patrols discover many human interests. They have exceptional facilities for watching the wild life of the veldt, undisturbed by the passage of an army corps. They can study at first hand the domestic life of the Boer. They can appreciate the market value of the Kaffir. Often, on patrol, have I marked down a future happy hunting-ground; some of the most vital mental pictures of Boer life I retain I photographed ocularly on patrol. I remember once taking a few men to unearth some rifles said to be buried near some farms. We galloped up and surprised the inhabitants, who crowded out of their two small houses in bewildering profusion. I never saw so many women in so small a compass. They were of all ages, and the children were in proportion. Old, middle-aged, and young, the women were alike pasty, cross-featured, and unhealthy-looking; the younger ones wore pig-tails and very short skirts. The windows of the farmhouses were filled with muslin instead of glass. Another day I surprised a comely fair-haired *vrouw* butter-making. Her two small boys were playing on the floor of the central hall; the game consisted in pegging large lumps of dough

to the floor with nails. They were too young to hate the very sight of the *verdomte Englander*, and they rushed at my legs with wild huzzas and we had a tremendous romp together. As I got on my horse outside the little flower-avenued approach, where a gigantic fuchsia bloomed in a thousand coruscations of purple, a tiny maiden came out bearing a glass of milk on a plate. It was the mother's recognition of my part in the little boys' game ; 'one touch of nature makes the whole world kin.'

Scouting bears the same relation to a moving force that patrolling does to a stationary one. The business of scouts, who are usually thrown out in the front and on the flanks, is to guard against the surprise of their main body, and, incidentally, to report difficulties in the road, suspicious objects, evidence of the enemy's proximity, and all the hundred and one things that may materially increase the knowledge and better the position of the force. It is invariably the work of mounted troops, where they are available, and is necessarily dangerous, though not nearly so dangerous as that of infantry who attack positions. It is a post of honour, and as such is of course highly valued. It was amusing to note the difference in the demeanour of Rimington's when we were scouting and when we were in the least honourable place—baggage-guard. As the former the men were keen, alert, interested ; as the latter they slouched along, talking about anything and everything but the day's work. Scouting is work peculiarly suited to colonials. Their independent life as farmers, cowboys, ranchers, and what not, gives them a knowledge of what our forefathers called 'venerie' which very few English Tommies can acquire. The colonial studies the signs of the heavens ; he acquires a dog-like faculty for finding his way unaided over pathless wildernesses. He has stalked big game, and knows

how to use the ground and the cover on it to the utmost. He has an instinct for avoiding positions which might possibly put him at a disadvantage. When we saw men boldly outlined against the sky on a kopje we marched steadfastly on, for we knew that no Boer would ever expose himself and his position in that fashion. But Tommy Atkins could never be cured of the trick.

Occasionally scouting has its ludicrous side. On one fateful day we received orders to act as scouts in advance of Lord Roberts, who was to ride from Smaldeel across country. There was said to be a road somewhere, and that road we were to 'make good.' We scouted in due course, searching in vain for a road which did not exist in advance of Lord Roberts, who went, as we heard afterwards, by one which did. This annoying mistake, which gave us twelve hours' hard work for nothing, was due to the carelessness of some Staff officer, who had bungled over his map.

Marching, the most frequent of the daily duties of the soldier in South Africa, is very laborious work. It begins at half-past four, or thereabouts, in the morning, and lasts till five or six in the evening. There is no other pace than the walk, and at times the monotony of it gets on the nerves. The sameness of the veldt accentuates this feeling. Fighting, or the chance of it, however, generally acts as a stimulus; there were few days on which no shots were fired. To me, the mere presence of the army was a constant joy. There was something inexpressibly awe-inspiring in the sight of those vast moving masses of men; men trudging on cheerfully on foot, men plodding forward on horses, men driving guns, men driving waggons; all acting under the command of a single master-mind, all inspired by the same love of Queen and country. The brilliant atmosphere shed its charm even over the dust;

and the dust enhanced the rising and setting glories of the sun.

Like everything that is heroic in this world, it had its sad side. Not a day passed but you saw horses and mules and cattle sink down exhausted, to be left behind to die. The great engine moved on its way with the relentlessness of an inanimate thing. Wrecked homes and trampled crops marked its path; and it was happiest where the owners had fled. Women's tears and lamentations, even Boer women's, are what no man can see and hear unmoved. Poor things, how much they had to suffer! even though, as I believe, no army ever treated the women of the country with such chivalrous respect as our soldiers treated the Boer women. Near Ventersburg Road, the same day that the Scots Greys and Inniskillings got cut up at a farm not three miles from us, we bivouacked close to a house wherein a lonely Boer mother wailed over her dying child. The woman had no milk for the child herself; it depended for its life on the cows that the Boers themselves had driven off to safety as our army drew near. The little creature was, in truth, slowly starving. We did what we could; we gave the woman all the tins of condensed milk we could muster; but they would profit her nothing. So large are the circles made by the deadly splash of the mill-stone of war. Not a shot is fired, not a man bites the dust; but an army advances, some cows are driven off, a little child dies, and a mother's heart is broken.

Nothing exceeded the unpleasantness of night-work. Night-work did not bring with it its own compensations; there was no sleeping all next day, like a signalman. A single night's work involved thirty-six hours continuously in the saddle. I am bound to say we did not have very much of it. But it has been my lot to nod over a fire at

ten o'clock at night waiting to escort a convoy that was due to start at three in the afternoon. We were wasting time, and time was wasting us. That night my first and most serious duty was the awakening of those troopers who had obviously gone to sleep as they rode. We marched in file (two and two) alongside a portion of the immense string of laden waggons, which naturally moved at a snail's pace. A couple of extra wakeful persons were kept constantly on the flanks, about three hundred yards distant. These displayed a great tendency to lose us in the dark, or to go on when the convoy stopped, as it frequently did, and so get far in front. When a man went to sleep his horse recognised that all restraining influence had ceased, and he wandered out of the ranks at his own sweet will into the darkness, with his rider tumbling and nodding in every direction over his head. My business was to go and prod him in the ribs and get him back to his place. I was exceedingly thankful I had nothing more serious to do. I cannot imagine a more difficult position than that of the escort to a convoy suddenly attacked at night. The foe are unseen; the extent of waggons to defend is enormous; the defenders are located by the black bulk of the huge vehicles. The escort to a convoy is nearly always inadequate, and might just as well not be there. The proof of this lies in the fact that when the Boers have attacked our convoys they have invariably captured them. Fortunately for us, they are extremely averse to night attacks. How glad we were when the sun rose, and our teeth stopped chattering in our heads, and our toes thawed in the icy irons! We had got to Sand River, the scene of the famous convention, and the guns were thundering in the distance. We had a capital breakfast down by the river, just out of sight of a pool wherein three bullet-riddled horses were

washing slowly to and fro. And then on for another twelve hours' riding ; and so to bed and to sleep.

Occasionally night-work was the outcome of an imperative demand for men, and men quickly. One evening, at Bloemfontein, after a long day's buck-hunting, I was taking off my boots with tired complacency, and looking forward to supper, when Charles appeared.

'I want you to be ready to take fourteen men to General Ian Hamilton at Springfield in half an hour,' he drawled in a matter-of-fact voice. 'They must be with him by daybreak.'

I almost wished a thunderbolt would crash down on my devoted head, and relieve me of any further responsibility. The night was dark as pitch ; Springfield was close on thirty miles away ; supper would not be ready for more than half an hour. It was a glorious prospect. I put on my boots and gaiters again with reflections on the futility of having a friend as adjutant. It had come to this then ; and all our games together as children were as dust in the balance. It was revolting ; it was an outrage on affection ; it would create a breach which æons could not repair. All I could do was to order my grey pony, stuff some biscuits into the pockets of my fur coat, and snatch a cup of tea and a bit of cold meat. Then, at the stroke of seven, off went we fifteen victims into the darkness, to puzzle out an ill-defined track which only one of us had ever seen before ; to lose our attendant Scotch cart several times ; to fall into holes and gullies innumerable ; to get mixed up outside Bloemfontein with ordnance store tent-ropes, barbed wire, and mounted infantry ; to worry on hour after hour in the cold, over dead horses, spruits, dongas, and sluits.

About half-past two in the morning we got within

measurable distance of Hamilton's division, but where the General was I had to discover. I suppose the officer of the Inniskillings whom I woke up does not regard me with feelings of unmixed approval. After approximately locating headquarters I returned to my men, who were all asleep on the ground, under the lee of a primitive house. I lay down, too, with the reins in my hand, but sleep was long in coming. It was abominably cold, especially for one's feet, and my horse would persist in making investigations of my face with a cold and dewy muzzle. At last the sun rose, and our small detachment found its way to where Hamilton's division were already massed under arms, about to start on their famous victorious march past Winburg to Kroonstad. There is no general who has been more conspicuously successful in this war than Ian Hamilton. A group of officers were breakfasting hurriedly outside a row of tents, it was the headquarter staff, and amongst them Le Gallais, that splendid soldier whose early death in action has robbed the service of a great cavalry leader. He greeted me warmly, for we had sat next one another in the saloon of the *Scot* all the way from Southampton to the Cape. There we parted, to meet once again in the dim light of that morning at Springfield, and then, alas! never more. Le Gallais was a very fascinating man; his head was beautifully modelled, his eyes dark and sad, his voice soft and gentle as a woman's. There was a subtle suggestion of something foreign about him, to which his name lent colour. He was one of the most modest and retiring of men, and those who had never seen him play polo or lead cavalry into action would hardly have suspected his nature of its profundities of self-reliant strength.

There is no aspect of war about which the lay mind

displays so much curiosity as the feelings of those under fire for the first time. There has been a great deal of dogmatising and generalisation on the subject, and different writers have contributed diametrically opposite views. But I suppose we are at liberty to infer, from the practice of leavening raw levies with veterans, and both the preference which commanders display for old soldiers and their pointed commendation of soldiers who, in action for the first time, display no fear, that professional opinion inclines to the belief that *ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*. My own view is that the professional and generally accepted opinion is false, as based on conditions of warfare which are now obsolete. It was true when compact masses of infantry hurled themselves against compact masses, for then the proximity of a stout-hearted man nerved the weaker for a very real and imminent shock. It was true when cavalry dashed against cavalry. But since the long-range rifle has commanded the situation the conditions have been radically altered. The chance of a bullet, though quite as real, is not nearly so well realised a danger as a hand-to-hand conflict with perhaps a bigger man than oneself. In old days the neighbourhood of a strong and trusted comrade might avail a man's nerve much; to-day no man can avert from his friend the unseen, far-darting bullet. In short, the *rationale* of the old shoulder-to-shoulder discipline and *moral* is non-existent. I would adduce two arguments in support of this contention. I asked several men of tried courage whether they felt more fear the first time they were under fire than on any subsequent occasion. They all replied in the negative, and my own experience is the same as theirs. Two or three men who had been wounded were unanimous in declaring that the first real demand on their courage

was made on going into action for the first time after their wound, but this feeling soon passed off. The burnt child dreads the fire, but the child who has never been burnt displays extraordinary courage in its treatment of kettles and fire-irons.

My second argument is that, if many thousand irregular troops, few of whom have ever previously been under fire, go through a campaign without displaying the remotest affinity to panic on any occasion, the popular belief that more fear is felt during the first action may conceivably be a true belief, but certainly its importance as a factor in military discipline and organisation is destroyed. The Volunteers—raw civilians, remember—went through the war with a courage and a *sangfroid* under disturbing conditions which elicited the warm tributes of experienced fighting-men. If the point be proved, as I think it is up to the hilt, that under modern conditions previous experience of bullets and shells puts no premium on a soldier's efficiency, what a revolution may be safely made in our methods of training ! The present drill system is based partly on the old need for shock and weight of impact on a similar body of the foe, and partly on the theory above alluded to, the necessity for providing each soldier with some moral support exterior to himself. To-day neither of these necessities arises. Consequently our drill system is antiquated, and the inordinate amount of time spent on drill is wasted. And yet regulars do very little else than drill. The whole tendency of modern warfare is to show that the non-professional soldier who can use a rifle is on a par with his professional brother. It would almost seem as though, in the great scheme of things, this natural counterpoise was to check and balance the excessive militarism of the present age. I think it is

certain that the moment free countries like our own recognise, as they are fast doing, that a militia or voluntary system can, without loss of efficiency, reinforce in times of peril the nucleus regular army, there will be a considerable sacrifice of regular troops now erroneously supposed to be essential to security. Despotisms may for long continue to exact the taxation necessary for the support of vast standing armies, but the peoples' contrast of their lot with that of the citizens of free States will accentuate their discontent, until socialism and anarchy produce disruption. I think few people will disagree with me when I say that shells are infinitely more perturbing than bullets. When you hear the whizz of a bullet it has passed you; your only fear can be of the next one. But a shell is different. You see the puff of white smoke on the distant hillside, then you hear the boom of the report, and you ask yourself 'Is it coming my way?' Close behind the report comes the shell, and you thank Heaven that it has not come your way this time. But its hideous buzz as it hurtles through the air strikes on your soul like the curse of a malevolent spirit, and every puff on the hillside recalls the demoralising train of thought. On the other hand, intimate acquaintance with shell-fire reveals the fact that it does extraordinarily little damage compared to that done by rifle fire, and this discounts its terrors in the eyes of veterans.

Curiously enough, the hottest fire I ever was in was the first time I was under fire. At least eighty Boers were firing at me alone from about two hundred yards off. The bullets were unpleasantly abundant, and my pony Tommy galloped as he never galloped before or after that event. I attribute my escape to the fact that I rode obliquely, instead of directly away from the Boers, thus

presenting a moving target instead of a practically stationary one. On this occasion it did not much matter whether I was in a funk or not, because the only course was to bolt. But I am bound to say that fear played little or no part in my sensations, nor did it ever when actually *in medias res*. The soul-sickening anguish, the torturing doubt, that wring the soldier's heart as he leaves those whom he loves for the uncertainties of war are the ugliest disguises in which fear assails him.

A very real danger in warfare is from your own side. We had numerous instances of this—instances in which we were the offenders, and instances in which we were the offended. I think I told you of the incident connected with the colonel of the Yorkshire regiment, which the offender characterised as likely to create a bit of a coughdrop for the rest of the puff. On another occasion the Major himself mistook a couple of friendly Kaffirs for Boers, and fired several rounds of his Mauser pistol at them before he discovered his mistake. Near Leeuwkop, Willum, one of our boys, was fired on when reconnoitring, and wounded in the finger. It was thought that Boers in a farm had done the deed, but investigation proved that some of Roberts's Horse in the vicinity were responsible. The case with the most serious possibilities occurred at Poplar Grove. In the course of that somewhat bungled engagement we received orders to make a demonstration in a direction which landed us in a zone of heavy shell-fire. We were then ordered to charge some kopjes in the opposite direction, an operation which cost us several men—but that is another story. As we galloped across in front of the cavalry division, who were all sitting like spectators at a play instead of dashing forward and sweeping all before them, a M.I. officer came galloping up,

and began talking with a scared face. 'Good God!' he said, 'I was just giving my men orders to fire, when someone suggested it might be you!' 'Yes,' replied Charles, in his slow, phlegmatic way, 'can't you find any Boers to fire at? There are lots of 'em about.' So that was how we avoided a decimating fusillade at close range from our own people, and I think it throws a lurid light on the conduct of that battle.

The first fighting which I witnessed was at Paardeberg. It is not generally known in England that a local name for a portion of the ground over which the Paardeberg operations extended is Stinkfontein. Those who professed to prefer truth to æsthetic glozing hoped that for all time Stinkfontein might give its name to the scene of that gruesome surrender. But either name conveys an apt allusion. Paardeberg means 'the horses' hill,' and the horses were the passive instruments who created the ineffable stench of those purlieus.

Figure to yourself a vast sandy desert, fringed towards the horizon by low flat-topped kopjes. Through the middle of the desert wanders a thin belt of vivid scrub; it is the vegetation that fringes unseen Modder. Thousands of British soldiers surround, in an ellipse extending ten to fifteen miles, a little centre of a few hundred yards of the unseen river. Down there, where the bushes widen out into something like a tiny wood, five thousand human beings are packed into the loamy banks as close as rabbits in an overcrowded warren. Thin dark lines parallel to the green mark the trenches. Those, and the great circle of waggons, were all that the British could see of their bayed foe; and on that narrow area was concentrated the whole venom of the British attack. If the Greek conception of the value of tragedy as a purifier of the emotions

be a just one, few can have gone away from Paardeberg worse than they came. The overwhelming numbers of the beleaguering force ; the triumph of the defenders over the determined assault of that force ; the slow carnage ; the ghastly atmosphere ; the humanity of Lord Roberts's proposals ; their rejection by a gallant band of patriots ; the deadly thunders of the howitzers preparing the way for the magnificent tenacity of the Canadians' conquest ; the sullen grandeur of the inevitable surrender ; the courteous appreciation of a gallant foe—all these constitute a tragedy of the most heroic type.

Dead horses lay in scores over the wide area of the fighting ; the sultry autumn air was putrid with the stench of decay ; for many days the river was studded with the gas-inflated noisome carcasses of animal victims. Bathing one day in the rushing river I counted fifteen dead horses go by in half an hour ; as I clung to the branches of a willow to avoid being carried down stream, the hoofs of a dead horse, swirling round the bushes, narrowly missed my face. One afternoon Charles and I rode up to the naval gun, where the jolly sailormen of the *Doris* ruled supreme. We looked through their gigantic telescope, and saw many things. A solitary sniper advanced from the Boer trenches towards us ; he was very bold, and marched calmly on till he got within easy range ; then he lay down and potted away in our direction. The sailormen accordingly put a shell in his direction, and succeeded in slaying a horse. Little black figures buzzed about in the Boer trenches ; scattering into cover when a shell came, and popping out again the moment it had burst. It all looked very unreal and Liliputian.

The lyddite bombardment on the afternoon preceding the surrender was a sight never to be forgotten. Six

howitzers plunged their huge lyddite-filled bombs into the doomed camp. The roar of bursting shells and detonating cannon was unbroken and terrific; into the pure blue arose an opaque pall of greenish smoke, completely shrouding the laager from our sight; it was as though the Angel of Death had spread his wings over the victims there. It was Cronje's obstinacy that necessitated this; everyone knew that Lord Roberts had exhausted every friendly counsel to induce Cronje to surrender before exposing his women and children to such an awful ordeal. It did not last long, an hour at most, and then a fearful silence came. We went to sleep in our tiny bivouac by the river; and about three the next morning we were awakened by the muffled sound of rifle-fire. Nowadays continuous musketry at a certain distance resembles nothing so much as blankets violently shaken. Charles led out his little force of Kimberleyites, about thirty all told, across the veldt in the dark, and halted them to await developments. They never came; the battle had been waged and won by a very small section of the encompassing army. The honour and glory of Paardeberg will for ever be a jewel in the diadem of Canada. The Canadians had advanced during the night and dug parallels to within fifty or a hundred yards of the Boer outposts, connecting their trenches with the river-bank. This device outflanked the Boers, who fusilladed the British till dawn, and then, when they saw that retreat was cut off, they surrendered. With them, on Majuba Day, surrendered Cronje and four thousand men. We crossed the flooded river early in the morning; the water rushed down with a force that nearly carried our horses off their legs. We went down to headquarters, and there we saw Cronje, sitting in a deck-chair beneath the mimosa

bushes, guarded by a large square of Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders.

He is a thick, short, stout man, very dark, and he wore black trousers, a large grey coat, and brown boots. Round his grey felt hat was an orange riband. He is bearded, strong, and cruel looking. Then we rode on to the Boer laager. On the south side of the river the prisoners were ranged in two huge living ribands, Free Staters on one side and Transvaalers on the other, merging in an apex. They carried their bundles of gaily coloured rugs, but otherwise they looked sombre enough. Some of them raised their hats respectfully as our officers passed. Near the river were piled their Mausers, in great heaps six feet high and as many broad. Boys of fourteen, and women, and babies were there, as well as patriarchs with hoary beards. The New South Wales M. R. and ourselves, as guard to the General, passed by the whole length of this melancholy throng, crossed the river by another drift, and found ourselves in the Boer laager. It was a pitiable sight—an epitome of the horrors of war. Ranged in a broken circle were the huge roofed-in waggons, with many an interval on which heaps of calcined iron was all that fire had left of a Boer's home. You could hardly go ten yards in any direction without coming on a dead horse. The stench was dreadful. Beneath a white flag in the centre of the laager, crouching for shade under a couple of waggons, lay the wounded. One man, wounded in the neck, kept up a continuous wail. I gave another some water and he seemed grateful. A big Australian surgeon was here, there, and everywhere, attending to the worst cases, and gradually moving all to the field hospital. An extremely pretty girl, with a wounded arm in a sling, was looking on coolly. In

an open waggon near the drift three little girls stood and watched the passage of the British troops. The horrid scene before them appeared to have lost all its power to terrify; they gazed calm-eyed at the bloody desolation of the laager; the cries of stricken men fell unheeded on their ears. When they are grown old, and their nerve fails them, they will remember the sights and sounds of that day and the days that went before it, and they will shudder in their beds.

The trenches and the riparian refuges were marvels of construction. The former were six feet deep and narrower at the top than at the bottom, so as to secure at once the maximum of room and the minimum of danger. The latter were large editions of the holes that martins drill in gravel-pits—horizontal borings in the cliff-like banks of the river. Both the laager and the trenches were full of litter, and though the strictest orders were out against looting, and the Provost Marshal was riding about, you can believe that some few unconsidered trifles escaped his notice. Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa abounded, and was much sought after. Rations were never so short as at Paardeberg, and men who had given a shilling for a ration biscuit were quick to recognise and appropriate satisfying and palatable food. Pots, blankets, cartridges, pillows, trunks, and quirts (riding switches) were perhaps the commonest things. I saw an R. A. officer pick up a pair of handcuffs. It is said that Cronje shot three men with his own hand the night before the surrender. He does not look the kind of man who has much use for handcuffs.

From Paardeberg Charles led his little commando past Koodoosrand, the station of French's cavalry division, to join the main body of Rimington's at Makouw's Drift, the most advanced post of the army. The next morning

I received my baptism of fire. At 4.15 A.M. the Major blew his whistle, and we all got up and put our boots on in the dark. Charles did not come, his ankle hurt him too much to make him very keen about early rising. We rode out to the Boer position, about three miles away, behind a long, flat-topped kopje. As we walked across the flat expanse of veldt, the sun's great disc rose above the horizon, and chased away the saffron and yellow radiance in the east. We had flankers out on both sides, and two scouts about three hundred yards in front. After going about two and a half miles we came within four hundred yards of a small ridge. The main body halted under cover of a rise in the ground, while the two scouts went on towards the ridge. Each man advanced towards the flank of the ridge on his front; they were, perhaps, three hundred yards apart. When they had got within two hundred yards of the ridge some concealed Boers opened fire.

The horse of the man on the left was hit and fell, pinning his rider to the ground. The other scout—Christian—at once galloped across to help his friend, and then, jumping off his horse, he pulled him from under his dying pony. As he did so, a bullet from the ridge struck him, and he fell, mortally wounded. 'Get on my horse and ride for your life,' he said to his comrade; 'I'm done for.' The man did as he was told and came back to us. Before he had started, however, Rimington had acted with the pluck that distinguishes him and endears him to his men. Without giving an order to his men to follow him into a situation that was obviously exceedingly perilous, he called for his roan and galloped off to help his wounded trooper. 'You're surely not all going to leave the Major to go out there by himself!' bellowed old Hanger, a Colonial of

over sixty, grey-bearded, long-headed, and as bold as a lion. He was Uncle Hanger to everybody—a title conveying mingled affection and respect.

Hanger and I were on our horses at the same moment, and we caught up the Major just as he got to where poor Christian lay. Five Boers got on their horses and rode off as we approached, without firing another shot. It was foolish of them; they might easily have bagged all three of us. Rimington took off his covert-coat and gently laid it under Christian's head; then he told me to stay with the wounded man while he went to the ridge to reconnoitre. A messenger was sent back at full speed to bring out the ambulance waggon from camp. I was with Christian for an hour and a half waiting for the slow mules. I hope I shall never go through another such experience. The bullet had hit him low down in the left side and travelled upwards, coming out below the right arm, penetrating the lungs. The poor fellow was in terrible pain and breathed with difficulty. His bearded face was ashy white, and great drops of sweat rolled down it. He asked constantly for water and was sick the moment he had swallowed it. 'My God, let me go!' he kept groaning. At his request I moved him into an easier position, and as I did so I noticed that the ground beneath him was all red with his blood. I took off his bandolier so that he should not see how crimsoned it was. Towards the end of the time, an orderly came from Rimington to say that the Boers were advancing in large numbers, and that in case of a retreat I was not to stay with Christian. Dick Master came to me about this moment, and the ambulance waggon hove in sight. Dick galloped to bring it on quicker, and at the same time our retreat began. Men, by twos and threes, came cantering past Christian and myself, and in

the distance I could see hundreds of Boers galloping towards the ridge we were evacuating. At last the ambulance came up. There were only three of us—myself, the Red Cross corporal, and his Kaffir ‘boy’—to put Christian into the waggon. We got the stretcher out with difficulty, for it had stuck on its runners. I never tugged so hard in my life as I did at that stretcher. We lifted Christian on to the litter, and caused him an infinity of pain in so doing. Then we had to lift him into the waggon, a very heavy job for three men, as the runners are high up. At last he was in, and the vicious reception I got from the Boers as I galloped away I have described elsewhere. Rimington’s pony was hit in the near hind fetlock, but otherwise we had no more casualties.

The Boers surrounded the ambulance and took away Corporal Townsend’s pony, but it was afterwards returned to him by their Commandant. After a long delay, the ambulance came back to us, and we returned sorrowfully to camp. Christian was at Eton, though a trooper in ours; his younger brother and I used to go out in a pair-oar together at the Brocas.

I took all the blood-stained cartridges from his bandolier, and put them in my own, praying that some day a lucky shot might avenge him. He died the same afternoon at half-past three and was buried by five. The whole corps attended his funeral. The men put up a tablet of wood to mark the spot where he lies beneath the aloes in the little Dutch churchyard:

February 28, 1900

EWAN CHRISTIAN

RIMINGTON’S GUIDES

HE DIED TO SAVE A COMRADE

You could not, I think, better the terse eloquence of that last line. It contains a whole world of pathos, of courage, of selflessness, of glory, of regret—eternal verities seen through human tears.

On March 7, the day of the battle of Poplar Grove or Webb's Drift, we got up at 2.30 A.M. in the dark, snatched a cup of coffee and a biscuit, and stowed what we could get in our saddlebags. At three the column started, about 4,500 men, cavalry, mounted infantry, and guns, under General French. The stars lit us as we started, but soon the east lightened with the advent of the sun, and silhouetted the vast moving masses of men and horses against the faint amber of dawn. The air was filled with scent and sound, for the night-dews had charmed out the aroma of the Karoo bush, and the rattle of limber-chains, the rumble of guns, and the muffled roar of orders shouted down the lines combined to drown even the thunder of 20,000 hoofs. At length the sun rose, and we saw ourselves in the middle of a plain bounded by kopjes running due east and west. Directly the light revealed us to the enemy a gun on the kopje to our left opened fire. Shell after shell fell right into the ranks, crowded as they were in quarter column of troops. I saw a horse killed and a man sent flying, but the marvel was that no more damage was done. The column marched steadily on with beautiful precision, taking no more notice of the shells than if they had been *confetti*. Our division was only a part of the total force engaged, for an infantry division was making a frontal attack on the Boer position, aided by the naval guns, and our objective was a turning movement to take the Boers in rear. In this we completely failed. In front of us and to our right, along Modder's bank, we saw the long billows of dust

raised by the galloping retreat of the Boers and their convoy ; Mr. Kruger was amongst those who fled. On our left a few guns bombarded us ; on our front and right a very few hundred Boers fought their rearguard action with consummate skill. The ground in front was almost a dead flat, and eminently suited to cavalry. On the other hand, the excrescences here and there enabled a few Boers to lie firing at our immense unsheltered phalanxes with deadly result. There cannot be the smallest doubt that, if our whole division had pushed on across the three miles or so between us and the river, the Boers would have retired pell-mell before us, and the convoy and many prisoners would have fallen into our hands. Moving, too, in extended order over a wide front, we should have had fewer casualties than resulted from our huddled formation and constant halts.

I cannot understand the military art as practised by some of our commanders. Their objection to the responsibility of individual action seems almost insuperable ; in consequence chances are lost over and over again. For instance, there was a farmhouse on our right into which we watched several Boers, who began firing at us. Rington, who was nearest the farm, at once ordered us to extend, surround the farm, and thus capture, or put to flight, our tormentors. We were half-way through this business when a galloper came full-speed from the brigadier, commanding us to retire. At another period of the day we had dislodged some Boers from a ridge, and held it ourselves. An order came that we should retire from it. We did so, and at once the Boers re-occupied the ridge.

Subsequently we were galloped aimlessly from one flank to another (never straight ahead), and came in for a heavy fire from this very ridge, which we ourselves had held an

hour before ! We were forced to retire, losing two men in the process. One was shot in the back. The bullet hit a cartridge in his bandolier, making a loud smack, and cutting a solid piece of lead out of it. The other, a sergeant, got a Martini bullet in the thigh, which came out at the groin. Mr. Maydon, M.L.A. (Natal), who was with us as a correspondent, had a narrow escape. He was close to General French, who had gone to abuse a battery of artillery for being put out of action by about twenty Boers, when a spent bullet struck him on the top of the head, making a flesh-wound about two inches long. Maydon found the bullet close to his horse's feet. There is only one hole in his hat. In the middle of the battle we came across a Boer doctor, called Van der Poet, who had brandy, and gave it to our wounded. He was an intelligent fellow, speaking excellent English, and told us that we were all—British and Dutch alike—wild beasts gone mad to fly at each others' throats as we were doing.

After the Boers had all gone we advanced to the river and bivouacked amid the miscellaneous filth of their abandoned camp.

The battle of Driefontein, one of the bloodiest and most decisive of the whole war, was fought on March 10. Rimington's were told to act as baggage-guard, which put them in the rear. It was, however, essentially the infantry's battle, and we had a good view. We started at 4 A.M., and about eight we got to a Boer house, which was internally in a state of wreck. Photographs, potatoes, fiddles, bedsteads, onions, and bottles lay about, and everyone who came in helped himself to what he fancied. I annexed a photograph of a Boer family ; not a thing of beauty, but characteristic. Then we went on in the

blazing sun, and heard guns booming ahead of us, and saw the neat little round white clouds that betoken shrapnel hanging like ethereal balloons over the shimmering brown kopjes on our left. Here it was that we witnessed a wondrous sight. A herd of at least two hundred springbuck got surrounded by troops, and within the area of a square mile they galloped, and jumped, and stood to gaze. Driefontein will long be remembered by the Essex, the Welsh, and the Yorkshire regiments. They behaved splendidly, advancing to the attack against a steep series of kopjes in the teeth of a most destructive fire. The Essex did, perhaps, best of all; for they passed through the other two regiments, taking ammunition from them, when things were looking very nasty. It was rumoured that their adjutant, Captain Parsons, had been recommended by General Kelly-Kenny for the V.C. What happened was as follows:—The cavalry reported that the artillery had routed the Boers out of the kopjes, and that the way was clear for the infantry. Consequently the infantry advanced, but meantime the Boers had returned, and their pom-poms snarled in front, and their rifle-fire enfiladed our troops. It was at this juncture that the Essex did such excellent work. We bivouacked that night near a dam, which held water that resembled nothing so much as a strong solution of Gregory's Mixture. You would have been appalled to see us all greedily drinking it—boiled, unboiled, with whisky, with tea, with coffee, and neat. But you could hardly distinguish the ingredients. Everything was swallowed up in the all-pervading gritty taste of mud.

The day after Driefontein we marched on twenty miles or so, alternately walking and cantering across the vast expanse of flat veldt. We struck a garden full of pump-

kins, and scores of men got off their horses and carried off one of the huge round vegetables in front of them, giving themselves at a distance the appearance of Chaucer's monk, whose fair round belly was with good capon lined.

On March 12 we marched with the light to Venter's Vlei, and there breakfasted on Maconochie's rations, biscuits, jam, and water-melons. These last taste like juicy cucumber, and if plucked before the sun is hot are deliciously cool and refreshing. As Horace said of his mulberries :

' . . . ante gravem quae legerit arbore solem.'

A large dam lay closely guarded by Highlanders from hordes of horses and mules that wanted to drink, and crowds of soldiers who wanted to wash, in the area fenced off for human drinking purposes. A slight rift in the veldt near the dam was studded with flowers, the small pink convolvulus being perhaps the prettiest. The air was strangely full of scent, which I discovered came from some small bushes of bog-myrtle. It was the only bog-myrtle I ever came across in South Africa. President Steyn's farm lay away in the distance, beneath a large pyramidal kopje, and towards it we marched, for the railway was our objective. At last we reached it, and soon the air was full of the noise of exploding charges. They were blowing up the culverts. Bloemfontein was almost within sight! You could feel the wave of exultation that swept over that great throng of dirty, tattered, bronzed humanity as it galloped on to its goal. The wires on either side the line were cut, and on we went. Then, as the sun sank in a blaze of glorious saffron, and flame-coloured clouds drifted across the sky like the fiery smoke of some colossal conflagration, the Boers opened

fire from some kopjes on our left. Pom, pom, pom, went their Vickers-Maxim, or 'Come-in-Eliza' as the Tommies call it, and bullets and shells came singing round us. A horse was struck and fell, but we all got away safely to the cover of a low kopje close to the Lazaretto. The latter is a cluster of small brick houses segregated on the plain. The builder of these fever-houses, an Englishman, was living in one of them; some of the others were hardly completed. While he entertained some officers at tea, troops sacked his house, carried off about forty pounds in cash, prodded his bedding for hidden treasure, and absconded with his 'spider.' It was not a creditable incident, and it put the coping-stone on Mr. Stay's misfortunes. He had built the lazar-houses for the Free State Government, and he had not yet been paid for them. In defence of the troops it must be remembered that they naturally believed that any resident in such close proximity to Bloemfontein must be a Boer. Mr. Stay was subsequently supplied with food by the military authorities, and compensated for the damage done by the troops.

At the Lazaretto we off-saddled, with the thunder mingling with the pom-pom in the darkness. We had all lain down, and half of us were asleep, when a Staff officer brought an order for us to go and reinforce the Scots Greys on a ridge they were holding. So on went our boots and spurs again (this at 9 P.M., and we had been on our legs ever since 4 A.M.), and out we went. Our guide took us wrong in the dark, and for some time we halted near a farmhouse (the very one where afterwards we lived for a month) while a small party went to find out whether it was inhabited by British or Boers. If Boers had been there they could have shot us all down as we stood by our horses. To me that seemed conclusive evidence that the

place was friendly. The party sent to inquire elicited nothing, so we went stumbling on to the first ridge we came to, which fortunately proved our destination. The Boers were shelling the kopje with very small success. There we built ourselves schanzes—small redoubts of stones—as a protection against shell splinters, and awaited developments. It was horribly cold, but I am ashamed to say that I went to sleep, with my head on a stone, and never slept better. With the first streak of dawn our guns began shelling the kopjes lying between our left flank and the town of Bloemfontein, which now appeared across the plain, a straggling collection of brown houses at the foot of a saddle-back kopje. As the sun rose we saw long lines of waggons trekking northwards from the town, and the Boer guns ceased to speak. A few rifle-shots were fired at us and the patrols beneath us on the plain, but it rapidly became apparent that the Boers were gone, and that Bloemfontein was ours. The Major is not the kind of man to delay. He galloped us across the veldt to the kopjes our guns had been shelling, and we charged up them. If there had been any Boers left on them it would have been tremendous, but they had gone. Soon after we got there, two Cape-carts were seen slowly driving out of the town. They contained the Burgomaster and Landdrost, who came to deliver up the keys of the public offices to Lord Roberts. All was over, bar shouting. Dick Master, with a party of ours, was the first British officer to enter Bloemfontein. There we were cheered and shaken by the hand and given cigars and cigarettes and loaves and drinks by the grateful minority of Britishers. Nearly all the Dutch inhabitants had fled.

I was not at the 'regrettable incident' of Sanna's Post, but I gleaned a good deal from the rest of them the same

evening that they got in, half-starved and dog-tired, from the rout. The Major left me behind at the farm in charge of the men returning from leave, a guard, the spare horses, and the cattle, when the rest of them marched off in the pouring rain to Thaba Nchu. I was in luck's way; they all hated going; there was nothing to do at Thaba Nchu; the weather was beastly. I had a roof over my head and any amount of buck-shooting. Charles went with them, but came back with March-Phillips a day earlier than the rest with all his possessions in his Cape-cart, thus missing the rout and retaining his effects. We three were the only officers in the corps who did not lose everything they had in veldt-world. The story is as follows:—Colonel Broadwood, leading his brigade from Thaba Nchu towards Bloemfontein, was harassed by the enemy in his rear. On the night of March 30–31 he halted between Modder (on his rear) and Korn Spruit (on his front). The Boers made the most of this first mistake. They hid themselves in the reeds and grass of the spruit, and brought up guns towards Modder. Colonel Broadwood, imagining in his guilelessness that danger could be apprehended only from the Modder direction, advanced without scouting his front towards the Boers concealed in the spruit or ravine. To show you how colossal was his confidence, he placed his convoy of waggons in the front, and Rimington's, known as Guides or Scouts, held the post of honour in the rear nearest the anticipated enemy. The waggons got right into the spruit before the Boers showed themselves. Naturally they had to surrender. The cavalry, notably Roberts's Horse, came on to learn the cause of the halt, and then, at a hundred yards range, the Boers hidden in the reeds poured out their magazines. Thirteen officers and two hundred men of Roberts's Horse went into action;

nine officers and eighty men were killed and wounded. Then the rout began. From the Modder side the Boer guns shelled the imprisoned British ; from the spruit their riflemen mowed down those who fled. Horses took fright and broke loose and galloped into any and every obstacle ; the gunners brought their guns into action and were picked off one by one till the guns were silent ; the regular cavalry escaped by galloping to a flank, where Dick Master found them a ford to get home by. It was a scene, they told me, of panic-stricken animals, confused men, and horrid carnage. Rimington, Alderson, and Pilcher mitigated the Boer success. They formed their men in an arc facing Modder, and kept the Boers in rear at bay. This, the redeeming tactics of the affair, saved many hundred lives. For three hours they fought on, and then they retired, having secured their comrades' retreat. Rimington lost twenty men, including natives, forty mules, four waggons, and the whole of their baggage. They were about eighty strong when the battle began. The Boers completed their victory by cutting off the Bloemfontein water supply.

Sanna's Post was prolific of personal adventure. Arnold, a Yorkshireman belonging to my troop, got a bullet through his head, and yet rode fifteen miles into Bloemfontein without falling off his horse. The bullet entered close to the orifice of one ear, and came out through the lobe of the other. Arnold smoked his pipe in hospital that same evening, and next day he got out of bed to go back to the corps, but was forcibly prevented by the nurse. The following morning, however, he was discharged cured.

Many of our men got right amongst the Boers, and had either to bolt or surrender. Van Wyk, a most gallant

German, who hates the Boers like poison, was in a very tight corner. Three Boers summoned him to surrender. He jumped off his horse, blew off the nearest one's head at short range, put a bullet through the second as he aimed at him, crumpling him up all of a heap, and took a pot shot at the third as he jumped on his horse and fled. But before he had gone very far a bullet passed through his chest. Nevertheless, he rode between two helping friends out of fire, went into hospital, and in a fortnight rejoined the corps. But the lung wound left weakness and a hacking cough behind it; and I fear poor Van Wyk will never be the same man again. Busschau, another of ours, had the worst time of all. At the same instant he was wounded in the upper part of the arm, the field-glasses on his back were shot away, and his horse was killed. The horse fell like a log, and pinned Busschau to the earth, ramming his wounded shoulder into the ground and hurting him most consumedly. For four hours he lay in this position, not twenty yards from where Q battery were making their heroic stand. For nearly four hours he listened to the shouts, the groans, and the ejaculations of the gunners as one by one they fell beneath the cataclysm of lead directed at the battery. The ground around Busschau was ripped in all directions; it was a marvel that he escaped. At last the victorious Boers came up; they released him from his horse, rifled his pockets, and took off his spurs. However, they left him his pipe, whether by accident or design, I know not. Some time after, two Boers, father and son, came round inspecting the British prisoners, and the old man felt Busschau's pockets and discovered his pipe. This he was proceeding to appropriate with great satisfaction, when his son interfered. 'No, father,' he said in Dutch, 'you mustn't do that; it is

unworthy of you. 'Think of your own feelings if you were in this man's position, and leave him his only friend.' The old man shamefacedly shoved the pipe back into Busschau's pocket. With twenty or thirty other wounded British, Busschau was taken for the night to a tiny corrugated iron hut, passing through lines of jibing Boer women. Huddled together in sickening proximity, their wounds undressed, many of these poor fellows died before morning and relief came. The Boers retired before the British advance, and the hut wherein the wounded lay became a mark for our own gunners. Busschau, with several of the less severely wounded, preferring death at the hands of their own comrades to recapture by the Boers, made their way safely in the teeth of a heavy cannonade to the British position.

Many savage acts, as well as many merciful acts, were done at Sanna's Post. It is quite certain that De Wet's influence saved the lives of many of our gunners when they were absolutely at the mercy of the Boers. On the other hand, hundreds of non-combatant Kaffir drivers were shot in cold blood. Our black cook—Peter—was amongst the slain. A man told me that he saw a Boer, frenzied with passion, go up to two disarmed gunners. Putting his revolver against the sergeant's chin, he blew his head off; then, turning round, he fired another barrel into the private's chest.

On May 1 the general advance began. It is the fashion to dilate on the hardships of the march from Paardeberg to Bloemfontein. My own experience leads me to believe that the march from Bloemfontein to Kroonstad was much more severe. There was fighting nearly every day, and some enormous distances were covered. On May 1 we started at seven A.M. and reached Brakpan, our halting-

place, at half-past nine P.M. None of our waggons had been able to keep up with the column, and there was nothing to eat and no blankets to sleep in. Besides, it was pitch dark, and the waggons might have been fifty yards away without anyone being a whit the wiser or the warmer. I went supperless to sleep in my fur coat, which I invariably carried on my saddle, to the envy of the shivering. It speaks volumes for the relations between officers and men that scores of the latter pressed their blankets upon the former, preferring their officers' comfort to their own.

The battle of Vet River (*i.e.* the river which makes the surrounding country fat) was the most considerable engagement in which we took part between Brandfort and Pretoria. On the previous day, May 4, we had a good deal of fighting, but it was styled officially a reconnaissance in force, and after having cleared the country for twelve miles ahead and taken several farms, we retired in the evening to our last night's bivouac, leaving the enemy to reoccupy the farms and provide us with the amusement of turning them out a second time. May 4 was a red-letter day in the looter's calendar. We happened on a couple of farms, very early in the day, where all sorts of good things were discovered. Such various articles as oat-straw, milk, green oranges, snuffboxes, shirts, tobacco and revolvers changed owners with the wholesale rapidity that is so characteristic of military commerce.

That same day we were escort to a battery, which is the very best place for seeing all that is going on. The only occasions on which I regretted owning a good horse was when these 15-pounders were discharged within a few yards of his nose. The poor brutes, frightened out of their skins, jump away with a determination that almost pulls

your arm out of its socket. Having put a few shells in the direction of a farm without hitting it, Rimington ordered A squadron to advance and take it. We opened out into a very loose formation, and advanced in an arc. The Boers, ensconced behind kraal walls, ought to have made much better practice than they did. When within seven or eight hundred yards we dismounted, every fourth man held the horses, and the rest lay down and blazed away at the buildings. It was here that a bullet splashed in the mud close to the face of a man rolling over to take cover behind a stone ; for a moment I thought the bullet had gone through him. Presently the Boers were seen to get on their horses and ride away ; so we jumped on our own and charged down on the farm across the flat veldt with all the blood-curdling cries that forty men of varied nationality can invent for these occasions. There was a Boer running away on foot into the kitchen garden ; one of the savage Broncho brigade caught sight of him and drew a bead on the wretch at fifty yards. I was just in time to prevent him firing. Together we captured the Dutchman, who tearfully begged for his life. He was the owner of the farm, and was evidently a much better farmer than fighting-man. I never saw so much stock in one place.

Round the farm grazed hundreds of cattle and thousands of sheep ; the kraals were full of calves ; the yard swarmed with geese ; the lofts were stuffed with straw. In the house two women and two little girls were resigned and miserable. They did not cry ; they cooked two or three of their own geese for us and sold us butter ; but the women looked like those whom the sudden shock of paralyzing misfortune has left dry-eyed and stony-hearted. They had probably awaited this catastrophe for many a

day, and now it had come. The farmer would, no doubt, have surrendered peacefully, but his friends had used his house as a position against the British. How often the bitter upbraidings of Boer farmers must have been directed against their own countrymen rather than against the invader! Poor women! Their flocks and herds were driven off; for them the day's work spelt ruin. In an outhouse adjoining the stable we found quite a little library; there were a lot of English books—a Shakespeare, a Shakespearean birth-day book, one of Tyndall's manuals of science, and many others. That merry grig De Landre, who hails from Waterford, and is always on the look-out for a joke, was immensely pleased with himself for finding a volume entitled 'English Interference with Irish Industries.' He and Pat Nolan, amid fits of laughter, played at being Nationalists for quite five minutes. It was while engaged in the domestic pursuit of goose-catching that someone pointed out to me that bullets were splashing about. As I have said elsewhere, we tried to respond with our puny weapons, but they were completely out-ranged. However, the Boers made no real attempt to dislodge us, and we naturally concluded that we should spend the night in the comfortable quarters we had won. The smell of roasting goose was uncommonly good, and to sleep on oat-straw would be luxury itself. But when the sun had almost set, a message came from the Major telling us to remain at the farm till after dark, and then rejoin the main body at our last night's bivouac. This was indeed pleasant. We waited till darkness prevented the Boers discovering our retreat, and then toiled wearily back over the ten miles won during the day. There were enough geese tied to our saddles to have tided London over Michaelmas.

Vet River was the most spectacular battle of all. It extended over a very wide front, and I speak only of the narrow area on the western fringe beneath my own observation. Imagine a swift river running between steep banks, bordered on both sides by a belt of dense mimosa-trees. Beyond the mimosas on both sides stretches a naked slope ; on the Boer side this slope ran into kopjes, on our own it spread into a sort of plateau. Our guns were placed at the top of the slope, on the rim of the plateau ; and Rimington's were escort to the guns. So the whole scene was spread out beneath us as before the spectators in the topmost tier of a Greek theatre. The Boers held the river-bank and mimosa belt on their own side in force ; behind them they had one gun. This gun seemed, by some fortunate dispensation, to have been placed a few hundred yards too far back. It fired at the guns we were escorting with great persistence, but the shells fell short. Several of them burst far too near to be pleasant. Curiously enough, the gunners did not locate this gun themselves. Englishmen's eyesight does not seem to be nearly as good as colonials'. Several of our men pointed out the momentary flash of the gun behind a single tree, and Rimington sent a message to the gunners giving them the clue. The effect was almost incredible. Whereas our guns had previously been firing wildly at mimosa bushes—bushes which gave no sign of the life beneath their shade, they now turned their attention exclusively to the single tree on the slope. The first shell fell short ; the officer gave a longer distance. The next went too far ; the officer gave a shorter distance. The result was perfect ; one shell dropped through the midst of the tree on to the gun itself, or so it looked to us. And we were not much out ; when we crossed the river later there were seven dead Boers round their

gun, all killed by that marvellous shot. The gun and its gunner are a wonderful pair.

Before the Boer gun was silenced it sent a shell so close to the New South Wales Mounted Infantry, then forming up preparatory to dismounting and charging down to the river, that one man was knocked off his horse by the wind created by its velocity. Then came the prettiest panorama of battle it has been my good fortune to witness. The Canadians and New South Welshmen, having left their horses behind, advanced at the double in extended order over the natural glacis between them and the mimosa belt. Attending each man ever as he ran was the shadowing puff of dust that spoke to a bullet, and yet not a single man was hit. The Boers across the river made their supreme effort; but they could not stop the charging British. Into the mimosa they crashed, and were lost to view; but the perpetual crack of rifle-fire showed us where they were.

Soon their work had its results; beyond the far belt of mimosa the slope was alive with fleeing Boers; they were evacuating the river's bank. Now our guns came into play again; they dumped their shells with supernatural accuracy into the little clumps of galloping Boers; and riderless horses and men on foot showed what execution they had done. It was a stirring sight. Our men, especially the Irish contingent, made amusing comments on our foes' discomfiture. 'Ah, but look at that fellow over there! He's just remembered a pressing engagement!' 'Mother of God! Hell-for-leather's about the size of it now!' So the drama went on, with its mingled comedy and tragedy, until the order came for the general advance. Then we rode down through a tall mealie-field across the river, and went to sleep peacefully on the ground where

the Boers had fought, and fled, and fallen. Not far from where I went to sleep I found a dead Boer in the morning. He had cut off part of his shirt and had tried to stuff it into a terrible shell-gash in his side. But the blood refused to be stanchèd ; and the red that had been in the ashy face was bedewing the thirsty veldt.

The narrowest escape I heard of was Charles's at Ramdam, just before the relief of Kimberley. He took his telescope and climbed, unarmed, up a steep kopje in order to spy out the land on the other side. As he breasted the crest he came suddenly upon from twelve to fifteen Boers, who had ascended from their side of the kopje for a similar purpose. He says he could have hit the leading Boer over the head with his telescope. There was nothing for it but to turn and run. The first shot was fired at about ten yards' range, and the whole party of Boers seem to have sat down and salivated him. The extreme steepness of the hill, the cover afforded by rocks and bushes, and the extraordinary pace that Charles can go up or down nasty places when he tries, seem to have proved his salvation. But half-way down he slipped and fell, and sprained his ankle very badly. However, up he got again and ran on ; and if you want to know what real pain is, sprain your ankle and then run down a steep place. At the bottom of the kopje an orderly was waiting with the horses, he helped Charles into the saddle, and together they galloped away. Presently a loose horse passed Charles ; it was the orderly's. He caught it and brought it back to the man, who had got a bullet through the nose. So Charles was missed by twelve men from ten yards up to five hundred, and his orderly was hit at five hundred. Charles was in hospital for ten days or more afterwards, and when I got up to Modder River he was

sharing a tent with a middy in the last stages of dysentery. They were not cheerful surroundings, and I prevailed on him to pitch a tent for us both in the more salubrious atmosphere of the river-bank. But he began working his ankle too soon, with the result that the joint is stiff. He can walk a mile or two, but then he tires. As to running, he finds that impossible—he is afraid his mountaineering exploits are finished. Those rascally Boers maimed him effectually, though not in the way they intended.

Some very curious accidents happened to those who acted under the prevalent impression that dead men, like dead lions, may with impunity be spurned by asses. At one of the battles on the western side, I forget which, a soldier tried to wrench a Mauser out of the hand of a Boer who had been killed in the act of pressing his trigger. The rifle went off and killed the man. Perhaps this may be a unique instance of a dead man killing a live one.

After Driefontein our men had to bury about eighty dead Boers. These were laid in rows, and the subaltern in charge told me that as one of his men took hold of a Boer to move him, the Boer's arm, with a violent mechanical action, flew up and hit the Tommy such a blow on the head as sent him flying in a dazed condition.

At Driefontein most of the Boers were hit through the head, which proved the accuracy of our men's shooting. Hardly any other part of the Boer was exposed. There were some gruesome pictures. Immovable statues, cold and grey, still looked along their rifles; one, a red-bearded giant, with an agonised look on his face that was more of fear than pain. In another place, right up against the last breastwork where the Boers had stood, lay the body of a private in the Essex Regiment. He still clutched his

rifle, with its bayonet all bloody ; close by lay the body of the Boer he had slain. There was content written on his face ; for him death was swallowed up in victory.

There is one face that will always haunt me. As we rode on to the Boer bivouac after Poplar Grove we saw many awful sights, but one surpassed them all in horror. Sitting propped up against an ant-heap was a thing ; it was no longer a man. Silent it sat, and immovable, with glassy eyes fixedly staring into vacancy. The mouth was torn to twice its natural size by a Martini bullet ; blood froze the chin to the tunic ; the cheeks were purple and swollen. In the back of the neck a great wound showed where the bullet had entered. The poor creature was not dead, but he could make no sign. We could do nothing for him, and we left him sitting staring across the sunny plain.

But I will not pile on the agony. There are certain persons in England who, in the attempt to cover their own want of patriotism and courage, have not hesitated to declare that the Volunteers of the Empire had a picnic in South Africa. Such a declaration serves a useful turn in fixing, for public purposes, our contempt for those who made it. It is a charge at once ignorant, untrue, and insulting. Ignorant, because the Volunteers and the Regulars fought together side by side without respect of persons ; untrue, because of the deeds and sufferings of the Imperial Light Horse, the Cape Mounted Rifles, Roberts's Horse, Kitchener's Horse, Driscoll's Scouts, and Rimington's Guides ; insulting, because of the slur it casts on the character and motives of men who risked all in their country's service.

Our soldiers, in their letters home, took good care to paint only the bright side of the picture ; they would

not add a touch that might increase, with the realism of detail, the anxious terrors of their loved ones. And so they wrote of glorious sunshine, of buck-hunts, or of cricket-matches; and the fever, and the dysentery, and the hunger, and the thirst, and the groans, and the blood, and the image of death, had no place on their canvas.

So debased and brutal are some of our Radical politicians that they made believe there was no hardship and no horror because the actors spoke of none. For the benefit of these, and those whom their libels may have influenced, I have added to these letters, now that I am back again with you, a few crimson details that I purposely kept out of the originals. Regulars and Volunteers, alike in their labours and their sufferings, were alike in the magnificent fortitude of their silent endurance. The Army of South Africa can afford to despise the calumnies of the fungus-brood of detractors. As I look back gratefully on the example of thousands with whom patriotism and duty triumphed over the greatest natural obstacles and the most dominant human weaknesses, I feel the bonds that shackle endeavour loosened; I take courage for myself in the contemplation of what my fellow-men have achieved.

The greater part of this moral debt I owe to Rimington's Guides. A better judge than I am has recorded his opinion of my gallant comrades, and I cannot end this long letter better than by quoting Colonel Rimington's farewell speech to his corps:

‘England has a lot to thank you for. At the start the corps was handicapped by rumours, the result of jealousies on account of your being the first force in the field, but you have lived that down by your good work and proved yourselves brave men. You are absolutely

the finest class of men I could have had under me. I could not have wished for better, and every general under whom you have served has the highest opinion of you.' And as the train steamed away: 'If you get a chance to capture De Wet, ride at him. Your country is proud of you, and so am I.'

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